

Italian Anarchism

1864-1892

NUNZIO PERNICONE

Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892

NUNZIO PERNICONE

“This is the first comprehensive study of Italian anarchism in English, covering the first three decades of its history. As such, it fills a conspicuous gap in the historiography of both anarchism and nineteenth-century Italy . . . Pernicone writes with an eye for the apt quotation and telling detail, and has organized a complex subject into a coherent and effective narrative.”

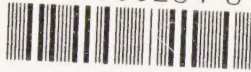
—Paul Avrich, Queens College,
City University of New York

Historians have frequently portrayed Italian anarchism as a marginal social movement that was doomed to succumb to its own ideological contradictions once Italian society modernized. Challenging such conventional interpretations, Nunzio Pernicone provides a sympathetic but critical treatment of Italian anarchism that traces the movement's rise, transformation, and decline from 1864 to 1892. Based on original archival research, his book depicts the anarchists as unique and fascinating revolutionaries who were an important component of the Italian socialist left throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Anarchism in Italy arose under the influence of the Russian revolutionary Bakunin, triumphed over Marxism as the dominant form of early Italian socialism, and supplanted Mazzinianism as Italy's revolutionary vanguard. After forming a national federation of the Anti-Authoritarian International in 1872, the Italian

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1864–1892

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Nunzio Pernicone

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*To my wife, M. Christine Zervos,
and to the memory of my parents,
Salvatore and Rose Pernicone*

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ABBREVIATIONS

BOOKS

- FI: Atti* = Masini, Pier Carlo, ed. *La Federazione Italiana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori: Atti ufficiali, 1871–1880*. Milan: Edizioni Avanti!, 1964.

REPOSITORIES

- ACS = Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome
ASF = Archivio di Stato, Florence

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

- AP* = *Atti Parlamentari: Discussioni della Camera dei Deputati*.

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome

- ACS, Carteggi di Personalità* = *Carteggi di Personalità*
ACS, Min. Giust., Miscellanea = Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia. Direzione Generale Affari Penali. *Miscellanea*.
ACS, Min. Int., CPC = Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, *Casellario Politico Centrale*.
ACS, Min. Int., Rapporti dei Prefetti = Ministero dell'Interno, Gabinetto, *Rapporti Semestrali dei Prefetti*.
ACS, Min. Int., UR = Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, *Ufficio Riservato (1879–1919)*.

Archivio di Stato, Florence

ASF, Questura, = Questura della Provincia di Firenze (1864–
Atti di Polizia 1919). *Atti di Polizia*.

FILING NOMENCLATURE

b. = Busta
f. = Fascio (used in ASF)
fs. = Fascicolo
scat. = Scatola
sf. = Sottofascicolo

Italian Anarchism,
1864–1892

Introduction

THIS BOOK is based on a simple premise—the Italian anarchists were a fascinating and important group of revolutionaries who during the half-century between the *Risorgimento* and the advent of fascism represented a major component of the Italian left. Anarchism, not Marxism, was the ideological current that dominated and largely defined the Italian socialist movement during its first fifteen years of development. During their heyday in the 1870s, the Italian anarchists, together with their Spanish comrades, were the most active revolutionaries in all western Europe. No other anarchist movement at that time produced leaders with the militant dynamism and intellectual vitality of Carlo Cafiero, Andrea Costa, and Errico Malatesta. Malatesta, whose sixty-year career is little known outside of Italy, stands with Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin as one of the great revolutionaries of international anarchism. Malatesta, in fact, exemplified the unique role played by Italians as missionaries of the anarchist ideal. Political refugees and emigrants, they established libertarian enclaves among Italian communities in France, Switzerland, England, Spain, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, and Tunisia. They contributed to the rise of radical labor movements in several host countries, especially Argentina. Even after ideological primacy and organizational initiative had passed to legalitarian socialism in the 1880s and 1890s, anarchism in its communist, syndicalist, and individualist varieties continued to attract a sizable and militant following among the Italian working classes until the late 1920s. Always considered the most dangerous subversives, the anarchists were persecuted by every Italian government, from the Cavourian liberals to the Fascists.

This book does not cover the entire history of Italian anarchism. Instead, it provides a comprehensive study of the movement's ascendancy, transformation, and decline in the nineteenth century. The story begins with the arrival of the Russian revolutionary Michael Bakunin in 1864 and ends with the exclusion of the anarchists from the Italian Socialist Party founded in 1892. A sympathetic but critical treatment, this study seeks to probe beneath the misconceptions associated with this unique breed of revolutionary; to present the anarchists as accurately as possible, without filtering them through the lense of ideological preconception; and to achieve a better understanding and appreciation of the Italian anarchist movement as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.

Bakunin played a decisive role in the Italian anarchist movement, and its first phase of development dates from his sojourn of 1864–1867. During

these years in Italy, Bakunin developed the essentials of his anarchist philosophy, attracted a devoted coterie of Italian disciples, and laid the foundations for the international anarchist movement. After leaving Italy and taking refuge in Switzerland, Bakunin became locked in a bitter struggle with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels for control of the International Workingmen's Association. Even before the International officially split into "authoritarian socialist" and "antiauthoritarian socialist" wings in 1872, Italian internationalists sided with Bakunin against Marx and Engels, a choice traditionally attributed by Marxist historians to Italy's socio-economic backwardness and political immaturity. The interpretation offered here argues that several factors other than Italy's belated industrial development accounted for the Italian internationalists' adoption of Bakunin's anarchist collectivism rather than Marx and Engels's state communism: the Russian was far more popular in Italy than his German rivals; his ideas were more compatible with Italian revolutionary traditions and aspirations; and Engels bungled the job of recruitment and public relations.

The movement's next stage of development coincides with the rise and fall of the Italian Federation of the Anti-Authoritarian International. The Italian Federation at its height attracted some twenty-five thousand members and many more sympathizers, making it the second largest anarchist organization in Europe after the Spanish Federation. Although dismissed by Marx and Engels as "a gang of *déclassés*, the refuse of the bourgeoisie," the Italian internationalists were predominantly artisans, workers, and students. Leaders tended to be revolutionaries of bourgeois origin who were declassed by virtue of having broken with the propertied class of their birth. Young chieftains like Carlo Cafiero, Andrea Costa, and Errico Malatesta possessed what Bakunin called a "heroic madness" to challenge and change the world. By any standard, they were stalwart fighters for liberty and social justice. As heirs to the revolutionary tradition of the Italian Risorgimento and in accordance with Bakunist doctrine, they saw themselves as a revolutionary vanguard whose mission was to lead the masses in the violent overthrow of the state and capitalism. Therefore, they did not organize the Italian Federation as a labor association that would struggle to improve the material conditions of workers and peasants, but rather as a political society whose main function was the pursuit of social revolution.

In their youthful optimism, the anarchist leaders of the Italian Federation presumed the masses to be instinctively revolutionary and libertarian, requiring only an insurrectionary push to rise against their oppressors. In 1874 and 1877 the anarchists took up arms to provide the masses with an example of direct action or "propaganda of the deed." Their insurrectionary endeavors elicited widespread sympathy from workers, peasants, and even middle-class elements hostile to the government, but they failed to stimulate violent repercussions as hoped. The Italian authorities, on the other hand,

were genuinely fearful that a spark from the anarchists might ignite popular revolt, and suppression of the International became a top priority by the late 1870s.

The anarchists underestimated the power of the liberal state just as they overestimated the revolutionary capabilities of the Italian masses. A few leaders like Malatesta, who was indiscourageable in the face of failure, hoped to carry out as many insurrections as necessary to precipitate the revolution, but the movement lacked the means for continuous direct action, especially in the face of government repression. Determined to end once and for all the subversive threat it represented, the governments of the Historical Left branded the International an "association of malefactors" and persecuted its members unrelentingly, using laws and methods devised for common criminals. It was government repression—not the insoluble contradictions so frequently deemed inherent to anarchist ideology—that constituted the primary factor responsible for the International's final collapse around 1880.

Government repression was also the principal cause and catalyst responsible for the metamorphosis of Italian anarchism during the years from 1879 to 1892—the period of crisis, transformation, and decline that represents the final phase of development analyzed in this study. The link between persecution and internal crisis was dramatically evidenced in 1879, when Andrea Costa abandoned anarchism and espoused a form of maximalist socialism that for all its revolutionary rhetoric was essentially legalitarian. Costa's defection not only provided strong impetus to the rise of legalitarian socialism, it precipitated a counterreaction among anarchists that produced new forms of self-defeating extremism—above all, a phobic aversion to organization, now seen as a harbinger of authoritarianism.

Because government persecution and the anarchists' own rejection of organization precluded reconstituting the Italian International or another working-class association devoted to social revolution, the movement by the early 1880s had become atomized into small amorphous groups incapable of coordinating action on a national basis. Save for minor forms of agitation and protest, their preferred activity was propaganda of the word, mainly through the publication of newspapers. More often than not, however, the anarchists were communicating among themselves. The movement's growing insularity and ideological inflexibility ensured that many anarchists—though workers and artisans themselves—would eschew involvement with workers' societies and their struggles for economic improvements. As a result, the anarchists in the 1880s lost their opportunity to establish a broad influence over the nascent labor movement, leaving most of the field to radical democrats and legalitarian socialists. During the 1890s and early twentieth century, the anarchists played a major role in the labor movement only in their traditional strongholds, such as Tuscany,

the Marches, Umbria, and Rome, where they enjoyed strong grassroots support and operated through the Chambers of Labor.

With contraction, isolation, and passivity came new manifestations of ideological extremism. Carlo Cafiero in 1880 argued that the clandestine, underground cell, devoted to “permanent revolt” (terrorism), was a more effective instrument for revolution than large-scale organization committed to collective action. But permanent revolt became a state of mind, not a program of action. Most anarchists by the late 1880s and 1890s rationalized their passivity and ineffectualness with fatalistic theories derived mainly from the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin: the revolution was destined to come, in accordance with natural or historical laws, and nothing the anarchists did or failed to do would hasten the process. The movement that evolved under the heavy weight of self-defeating tendencies and police persecution, therefore, was composed in the main of intractable rebels who had retreated into a sectarian subculture, generally passive but spasmodically violent, that eschewed any form of thought or action not in conformity with its own narrow definition of truth and orthodoxy.

And yet, while the broad picture of Italian anarchism in the 1880s and early 1890s shows a movement in negative transformation and general decline, a sharper focus on specific developments in this period reveals another dimension. Contrary to the impression fostered in many pro-Marxian accounts of Italian socialism, which hasten to erect a tombstone inscribed with *requiescat in pace* for their libertarian rivals, the anarchists were not reduced to sudden and complete insignificance after the collapse of the First International. On the contrary, despite ongoing persecution and internal crisis, the anarchist movement proved itself remarkably tenacious and resilient. In several regions, such as Tuscany and the Marches, anarchism remained the dominant school of socialism throughout the 1880s; in others, such as the Romagna, Piedmont, Liguria, Umbria, and Lazio, the anarchists retained a respectable following among workers even in the face of legalitarian ascendancy. It was only after the founding of the Italian Socialist Party in 1892 that the disparity in strength between the legalitarians and the anarchists became progressively greater throughout most of Italy.

The lingering influence and periodic vitality of anarchism during these years was attributable to the activities of a small number of dedicated revolutionaries who refused to accept defeat by their enemies or eclipse by their rivals. This revolutionary minority was led by former chieftains of the First International, notably Errico Malatesta and Francesco Saverio Merlino, and by young leaders of the new anarchist generation, such as Luigi Galleani and Pietro Gori. However, it was Malatesta who ranked as the movement’s central protagonist—the man who could make things happen.

Malatesta understood by the early 1880s that unless the anarchists char-

ted a new course for themselves, the entire movement would decline into that state of passive isolation and sectarian fanaticism that had become normative in so many circles. He therefore exhorted his comrades to abandon their ideological rigidity, reorganize themselves into a vanguard party, restore intimate ties with workers and peasants, and resume the path toward revolution. Malatesta's efforts to transform the movement on the basis of this program—save during his Argentine sojourn (1885–1889)—were unrelenting. Under his leadership and inspiration, the anarchist movement experienced several periods of resurgence: 1884–1885, 1889–1891, 1892–1894, 1897–1898. Although fleeting, these episodes of renewed militancy and expanding influence constituted significant achievements for the anarchist movement, all the more impressive because the obstacles confronting serious revolutionaries in Italy were so formidable.

Yet Malatesta could not achieve his goal. As if the movement were locked in a vicious cycle of advance and retreat, every anarchist revival triggered or coincided with a new wave of government repression (especially following great popular upheavals, such as the *Fasci Siciliani* of 1894 and the *Fatti di Maggio* of 1898) that eradicated all that had been accomplished and stimulated a backlash of censure and obstructionism from recalcitrants within the movement's own ranks. The personal costs to militant activists, who invariably fell victim to the repressive might of the state or suffered the privations of exile, were enormous. Thus the end of the 1890s found the Italian anarchists battered, isolated, and vilified. But their spirit remained unbroken. Most were ready to resume the fight, believing with Malatesta that "it is not a matter of achieving anarchy today or tomorrow or within ten centuries, but of proceeding toward anarchy today, tomorrow, always."¹

¹ "Verso l'anarchia," *La Questione Sociale* (Paterson), December 9, 1899.

PART ONE

Bakunin and the Origins of
Italian Anarchism

BAKUNIN AND THE ITALIANS, 1864–1870

THE SOCIALIST PRECURSOR: CARLO PISACANE

Students of Italian history have debated endlessly whether the Risorgimento, the movement of national resurgence that culminated in political unification, was a genuine success or a failed revolution—a *rivoluzione mancata*. Virtually none, however, dispute the fact that after national unification, “legal Italy” and “real Italy” were separated by an abyss. Millions of peasants, artisans, and laborers, deprived of voting rights and other forms of legal redress, remained desperately poor and exploited, even by mid-nineteenth-century standards. Nor could it have been otherwise. The conservative liberals who supported the House of Savoy were triumphant in their cause and ruled exclusively in the interests of Italy’s economic and social elite. The democratic followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi, on the other hand, decried the results of unification, but their principal grievance was with the monarchy and its initial failure to acquire Rome and Venetia, not the unresolved social question. A transformation of property relations amounting to social revolution was never on Italian democracy’s agenda. A socialist movement did not exist at this time, so a more radical alternative was unavailable. The Risorgimento produced few thinkers and activists whose views were genuinely socialistic: Vincenzo Cuoco, Vincenzo Russo, Giuseppe Montanelli, Giuseppe Ferrari, and Carlo Pisacane, to mention the best known. And perhaps only Pisacane conceived of the Risorgimento as a potential socialist revolution.¹

Carlo Pisacane, former chief-of-staff of Mazzini’s Roman republican army of 1849 and martyr of the Sapri expedition of 1857, is generally considered the precursor to Italian socialism. Influenced chiefly by the French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Italian federalists Carlo Cattaneo and Giuseppe Ferrari, Pisacane believed that the national and social questions were inseparable. The struggle had to be waged not only against the Austrians and the Bourbons, but against the rich and propertied classes as well, and success could only be achieved by a mass uprising of Italian peasants spurred by a socialist vanguard. Private property, which he considered the source of all inequality and suffering, would be swept away

¹ Leo Valiani, *Questioni di storia del socialismo* (Turin, 1958), 37–68 passim.

together with institutional religion and the state. A federation of free communes would guarantee the individual complete freedom of action as well as the fruits of his labor. Ultimately, all of European society would be organized according to the formula "Liberty and Association."²

These mechanisms and goals—the revolutionary overthrow of private property, religion, and the state—would later constitute the core philosophy espoused by the Italian anarchists and their Russian mentor Michael Bakunin. Because a few of Bakunin's associates—notably Giuseppe Fanelli and Attanasio Dramis—had previously been followers of Pisacane, the two leading historians of early Italian socialism, Aldo Romano and Richard Hostetter, have advanced arguments for Pisacane as the true fountainhead of modern Italian socialism and perhaps the source of Bakunin's doctrines as well.³ More recent scholarship has established that Pisacane's political writings and socialist ideas were unknown even to his closest comrades, and that Bakunin's anarchist philosophy had independent roots.⁴

Pisacane's political theories may not have contributed directly to the development of socialist ideology in Italy, but his conception of how the

² The seminal work on Pisacane is Nello Rosselli's, *Carlo Pisacane nel risorgimento italiano* (Turin, 1932). For a brief discussion of Pisacane's ideas, see Richard Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement I: Origins (1860–1882)* (Princeton, 1958), 18–26; Alfredo Angiolini and Eugenio Ciacchi, *Socialismo e socialisti in Italia: Storia completa del movimento socialista italiano dal 1850 al 1919* (Florence, 1919), 23–43; Roberto Michels, *Storia critica del movimento socialista italiano: Dagli inizi fino al 1911* (Florence, 1926), 7–9.

³ Aldo Romano, a staunch Marxist, ascribes the thinking of the Libertà e Giustizia group—the first socialist group in Naples—to Pisacane's influence. He further argues that Bakunin's antistatist ideas derived from Pisacane, and that the Russian's advocacy of revolution as the solution to the social question developed from exposure and opposition to Mazzinianism. Hostetter contends that the former Mazzinians who composed the Libertà e Giustizia group derived their ideas from Pisacane, not Bakunin, but he does not support Romano's thesis regarding the development of the Russian's theories. Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 103–112; Aldo Romano, *Storia del movimento socialista in Italia* (Milan and Rome, 1954), vol. 1, *L'unificazione nazionale e il problema sociale (1861–1870)*, 188–214.

⁴ Alfonso Scirocco, *Democrazia e socialismo a Napoli dopo l'unità (1860–1878)* (Naples, 1973), 178–209; Alfredo Capone, "Carlo Pisacane e il Mezzogiorno," *Il Veltro* 17, nos. 4–6 (August–December 1973): 707–721; T. R. Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians* (Kingston and Montreal, 1988), 57–74. The Bakunin scholar Arthur Lehning, writing before Scirocco's investigation, asserted that Bakunin was probably familiar with Pisacane's theories, but he rejected the notion that Bakunin's philosophy was influenced by Pisacanian ideas supposedly current among his Neapolitan associates. See his introduction to *Archives Bakounine*, ed. A. Lehning et al. (Leiden, 1961), vol. 1, *Bakounine et l'Italie, 1871–1872*, pt. 1, xviii; also Lehning, "Bakunin e la formazione dell'Internazionale in Italia," in Liliano Faenza, ed., *Anarchismo e socialismo in Italia (1872–1892): Atti del convegno di studi "Marxisti e 'Riministi,' "* Rimini, 19–21 ottobre 1972 (Rome, 1973), 160–162. Modern scholarship therefore supports the early pioneering work of Max Nettlau and Nello Rosselli, both of whom ascribed paramount influence to Bakunin rather than Pisacane. See Max Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale in Italia dal 1864 al 1872* (Geneva, 1928); Nello Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine: 12 anni di movimento operaio in Italia (1860–1872)* (Turin, 1927).

masses must be spurred to revolt was central to the anarchists' revolutionary strategy in the mid and late 1870s, when his works were rediscovered. In the *Testamento politico*, written on the eve of the Sapri expedition, Pisacane advanced the theory of "propaganda of the deed":

Propaganda of the idea is a chimera, the education of the people is an absurdity. Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former, and the people will not be free when they are educated, but will be educated when they are free. The only work a citizen can do for the good of the country is that of cooperating with the material revolution: therefore, conspiracies, plots, attempts, etc., are that series of deeds through which Italy proceeds toward her goal.⁵

Pisacane's theory presumed that the Italian masses, especially the peasants of the Mezzogiorno, were instinctively revolutionary and capable of spontaneous rebellion; all they required was a push from an insurrectionary band of elite conspirators.⁶ The Sapri expedition of 1857 was Pisacane's own attempt to use propaganda of the deed to rouse the Calabrian peasantry against the Bourbon monarchy. But the ill-conceived venture resulted only in the slaughter of his small band at the hands of the very peasants he had hoped to liberate. Pisacane himself took his own life rather than be captured, thereby ending any possible linkage between social and national revolution in Italy. Mazzini and Garibaldi, the real chieftains of the nationalist struggle, had no intention of stimulating a wave of peasant rebellion to obliterate private property and the state. It was not until the arrival of Bakunin that Mazzini's ideological domination of the Italian left was seriously challenged and a revolutionary socialist philosophy widely disseminated.

MICHAEL BAKUNIN

Michael Alexander Bakunin was already a renowned revolutionary when he crossed the Italian frontier on January 11, 1864. The aristocrat turned apostle of creative destruction had played impromptu roles as a leader of the Prague uprising in June 1848 and of the Dresden rebellion in May 1849, activities for which he spent more than a year in prison. Handed over to the Russian authorities, Bakunin languished for another six years in the dungeons of the Peter-and-Paul and Schlüsselburg fortresses, his body wracked by scurvy but his defiant spirit unbroken. In 1857, family petitions gained Bakunin's release and exile to Siberia. Four years later he escaped and made his way to the United States and then to London, where he resumed contact with many of Europe's most notable revolutionaries. His last revo-

⁵ Carlo Pisacane, *La rivoluzione*, ed. Augusto Illuminati (Bologna, 1967), 206.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 206–207.

lutionary adventure before visiting Italy was an aborted attempt to join the Polish insurrection of 1863.⁷

The Italian sojourn has been viewed traditionally as a transitional phase bridging the revolutionary nationalism of Bakunin's middle years with the revolutionary anarchism of his maturity. In reality the years spent in Italy represent the critical period during which Bakunin laid the foundation of his anarchist philosophy.⁸ Because of his twelve-year isolation, Bakunin arrived in Italy still espousing many of the ideas he had acquired from various European leftists in the 1840s: the German radicals Arnold Ruge and Georg Herwegh, the German communists Wilhelm Weitling and Karl Marx, the French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and an assortment of Slavic nationalists and democrats, such as the Pole Joachim Lelewel.

Bakunin had learned much from Marx at a time when his own socialism, he admitted, was "purely instinctive."⁹ But Marx's authoritarian communism, like Weitling's before him, impressed Bakunin as the negation of freedom, and he rejected it completely. Proudhon's contribution, in contrast, was crucial. Reading one of Proudhon's works, Bakunin exclaimed: "This is the right thing!"—that is, freedom was attainable only through abolition of the state.¹⁰ Proudhon, more than any other political thinker, was responsible for transforming Bakunin's instinctive rebelliousness against authority into a formal anarchist credo.¹¹

The antistatism derived from Proudhon in the 1840s remained latent, however. Revolutionary pan-Slavism was at the heart of Bakunin's political philosophy in this period. Yet he did not consider nationalism intrinsically important; it was a useful vehicle for revolutionary purposes, and by late 1848 social revolution was becoming preeminent for Bakunin, as evident in the drafts of his *Appeal to the Slavs*. The federation of free Slav republics he

⁷ For the literature on Bakunin, see Arthur Lehning, "Michel Bakounine et les historiens: Un aperçu historiographique," in Jacques Catteau, ed., *Bakounine: Combats et débats* (Paris, 1979), 17–43. My account of Bakunin's activities and philosophy up to 1864 is based on the following sources: E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (New York, 1961); Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1966), 36–62; Arthur Lehning's introduction to his edition of *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London, 1973), 9–29; Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta (1862–1892)* (Milan, 1969), 9–28; Max Nettlau, "Mikhail Bakunin—A Biographical Sketch," in G. P. Maximoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (New York, 1953), 29–43; H. E. Kaminski, *Bakunin (vita di un rivoluzionario)* 2d ed. (Milan, 1949); Ettore Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia: Gli agitatori-le idee-i fatti* (Milan, Turin, and Rome, 1907), 97–109; Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, 1967), 20–26; Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (New Haven and London, 1987), 112–139.

⁸ The traditional view is best represented by Carr. The importance of the Italian period is emphasized by Lehning, Masini, and Ravindranathan.

⁹ Quoted in Carr, *Bakunin*, 135.

¹⁰ Quoted in Nettlau, "Mikhail Bakunin," 37.

¹¹ Carr, *Bakunin*, 137.

saw arising from the ashes of the Habsburg and Romanov empires would be created through social revolution. By 1864, however, the failure of the Polish insurrection the previous year dispelled his faith in national liberation movements as a social revolutionary force. Thereafter Bakunin believed that socialist revolution had to take place on an international scale.¹²

At no time, however, did Bakunin envisage entrusting the social revolution to the bourgeoisie. The behavior of middle-class liberals during the revolutions of 1848–1849—shifting from instigators of rebellion to supporters of reaction whenever workers threatened to radicalize the situation—had convinced him that the bourgeoisie was a counterrevolutionary class that had to be overthrown along with its political institutions, parliamentarism and constitutional democracy. The destruction of existing society would be carried out instead by the working class. But unlike Marx, who considered the industrial proletariat of advanced nations the only true revolutionary class, Bakunin believed that the landless peasantry of economically backward nations like Russia, Italy, and Spain would constitute the decisive revolutionary force. Joining the peasants in revolt would be city workers and artisans, déclassé intellectuals and students, the *Lumpen-proletariat* of the urban slums, the unemployed, vagrants, and bandits—virtually every oppressed and disaffected element in society.¹³

During his Italian sojourn, Bakunin would refine his internationalism and federalism, embrace atheism and antistatism, designate a special role for the revolutionary elite, and elevate freedom to the apex of social requirements. These ideas, together with those retained from his revolutionary pan-Slavist period, would constitute the essence of Bakunin's mature anarchism.

BAKUNIN IN FLORENCE AND NAPLES

Bakunin considered the Italians natural allies of the Slavs in their struggle against the Teutons. In 1862 he tried to convince Mazzini to organize an agrarian revolt in Italy, hoping that an Italian rising would incite conflagration throughout the Habsburg realm. But Mazzini conceived of revolution primarily in terms of urban insurrection and had no interest in stirring up the Italian peasants. Bakunin also proposed an Italian-Slavic alliance to Garibaldi that year, but the general's defeat at Aspromonte on August 29, 1862, attempting to seize Rome, dashed Bakunin's immediate hopes. In his dreams of the future, however, Bakunin continued to link the Italian and Russian revolutions.¹⁴

¹² Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 54–56; Lehning's introduction to *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 19.

¹³ Carr, *Bakunin*, 178–188; Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 22–23.

¹⁴ Lehning, "Bakunin et les historiens," 27.

Revolution in Russia was still Bakunin's foremost concern when he settled in Florence in January 1864. The temporary capital of Italy, Florence hosted a sizable colony of political emigrés and an active circle of Tuscan democrats into whose ranks Bakunin gained entry thanks to local Freemasons. Many important Italian democrats, including Garibaldi, were Freemasons, and the Italian Masonic lodges became hotbeds of political discussion when Pope Pius IX promulgated the Syllabus of Errors on December 8, 1864, condemning liberalism and modern learning. A member of the Order of Freemasonry since his days in Paris (1840), Bakunin tried to capitalize on this ferment and, under the guise of Masonic reform, he presented the Florentine lodge with a program that was atheist, federalist, and socialist. Italian Freemasonry, however, was more anticlerical than revolutionary, and Bakunin's formulas were rejected as too radical.¹⁵

Bakunin, meanwhile, had met with Karl Marx in London on November 3, 1864, to discuss what activities he might undertake in Italy on behalf of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), which had been founded two months earlier. Marx did not suspect that Bakunin would one day become his principal ideological opponent and archrival for leadership of the International. At their meeting he was impressed with the ideological progress Bakunin had made since they last met in 1848, and he hoped the Russian could subvert Mazzini and recruit "some live Italians" for the International.¹⁶ Back in Florence, Bakunin reported to Marx that his work was progressing slowly. Potential recruits, "demoralized by the complete fiasco and errors of the political-unitarian-centralist school of democracy, have become excessively skeptical and indifferent. . . . Only passionate, energetic, and coherent socialist propaganda can restore life and will to this country."¹⁷

Bakunin neglected to tell Marx that his recruitment campaign was being conducted not for the International but for the International Revolutionary Brotherhood. Unlike Marx, who sought to build a large-scale organization of workers and socialist intellectuals that would function openly, Bakunin was committed to the idea that serious revolutionary activity must be conducted secretly, by an elite. He had previously organized a handful of exiles and friends in Florence into a secret society called the Florentine Brotherhood. Later, during a short visit to Sweden prior to his meeting with Marx, Bakunin laid plans for a European secret society called the International Revolutionary Brotherhood, which was to be inspired by his own program

¹⁵ Carr, *Bakunin*, 315–320; Lehning's introduction to *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 1, xviii; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 22–24; Elio Conti, *Le origine del socialismo a Firenze (1860–1880)* (Rome, 1950), 78–81.

¹⁶ Quoted in Carr, *Bakunin*, 323.

¹⁷ Bakunin to Marx, February 7, 1865, quoted in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 38–39.

of federalist, revolutionary, and antistatist ideas. Because the IWA was still composed mainly of Mazzinians, Proudhonians, and English trade-unionists, Bakunin considered his own organization far more likely to stimulate revolution. Marx would have considered Bakunin's activities a betrayal, and when he eventually discovered the existence of Bakunin's secret society (later metamorphosed into the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy) the rift between the two revolutionaries became unbridgeable.¹⁸

Bakunin tried to vitalize the Florentine Brotherhood after his return to Italy, but Florence proved barren soil for the secret society, and its members became inactive after he moved to Sorrento, near Naples, at the end of May 1865. Bakunin immediately established contact with the local democrats associated with *Il Popolo d'Italia*, a Mazzinian organ. His initial impressions were favorable. "You were not wrong about Naples," he wrote to one of his Florentine followers, "there is infinitely more energy and genuine political and social life than in Florence. At last, I have found some men. . . . There is very much to be done here. It is fertile ground worth cultivating."¹⁹

Naples was the ideal environment for Bakunin's revolutionary schemes. Democrats in the Mezzogiorno were more disillusioned with the outcome of the Risorgimento than their northern comrades. From the southerners' perspective, Italian unification had amounted to little more than the imposition of Piedmontese administration, law, and taxation, which antagonized virtually every class. The introduction of Piedmont's free-trade policies, moreover, wreaked havoc upon formerly protected industries and caused severe economic dislocation and depression throughout the south.

Southern democrats, like all who rejected the "royal conquest" by the House of Savoy, still looked to Mazzini for direction. But Mazzini had nothing new to offer. Inflexibly committed to his mystical formula of "Dio e Popolo," he saw the social question as completely subordinate to political revolution and the establishment of a "Third Rome." The problems oppressing the Italian masses would be resolved in the fullness of time—perhaps centuries. Meanwhile, Mazzini would do nothing to risk antagonizing the middle classes from which he drew his main support.²⁰

¹⁸ Carr, *Bakunin*, 323–326; Arthur Lehning, "Bakunin's Conceptions of Revolutionary Organizations and Their Role: A Study of His 'Secret Societies,'" in Chimen Abramsky, ed., *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr* (London, 1974), 57–81; Silvio Furlani, "Bakunine e la sua associazione segreta dei fratelli scandinavi del 1864," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 89, nos. 3–4 (September–December 1977): 610–651.

¹⁹ Bakunin to Angelo De Gubernatis, August 8, 1865, in Elio Conti, "Alcuni documenti relativi al soggiorno fiorentino di Michele Bakunin (1864–1865)," *Movimento Operaio* 2, nos. 5–6 (February–March 1950): 128.

²⁰ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 38–67; Gino Cerrito, "L'ideologia di Bakunin e gli internazionalisti italiani fino a Saint-Imier," in Faenza, *Anarchismo e socialismo in Italia*, 28–33; Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 161–191.

Militant democrats still remained faithful to the nationalist objectives of the Risorgimento and were ready to fight for Venetia and Rome whenever Garibaldi gave the call to arms. Mazzini's obstinate refusal to adopt a social program, however, was beginning to create dissension, especially in the south, where federalist, egalitarian, and libertarian tendencies were gaining support. The dissident democrats were typified by Attanasio Dramis of the *Il Popolo d'Italia* group, who refused to head Mazzini's movement in the south because he believed the Prophet's program could no longer win the support of the masses.²¹ Nevertheless, before Bakunin's arrival in Naples, none of the dissident democrats had formulated their ideas into a coherent alternative program. Nor had they dared defy Mazzini openly. Their influence on the mainstream of Italian democracy was negligible and their following among Mazzinian worker societies virtually nonexistent. Consequently, as of 1865, Mazzini's tired formulas and shibboleths continued to represent the only comprehensive challenge to both the liberal (Cavourian) monarchist government known as the Historical Right and the former republicans who composed the parliamentary opposition known as the Historical Left.²²

Bakunin was the only man in Italy who possessed the intellect, charisma, and audacity necessary to challenge Mazzini and convert his disenchanted disciples to the cause of social revolution. Bakunin's first attempt came in the fall of 1865, when he wrote five letters to *Il Popolo d'Italia*, warning democrats against the deceptions of Mazzini and Garibaldi, who one day might follow the example of Crispi and other ex-republicans and betray Italian democracy by supporting the monarchy in the name of political expediency. These letters, published under the pseudonym "A Frenchman," articulated for the first time the themes that were central to Bakunin's emerging anarchism: exaltation of liberty, federalism, antistatism, social revolution, democratic propaganda among the people, the inherently democratic and revolutionary instincts of the masses, and the concept of the heroic revolutionary elite.²³

Bakunin declared that "the liberty of each necessarily assumes the liberty of all, and the liberty of all can only become possible with the liberty of each."²⁴ To ensure respect for liberty, every organization of human society must be organized along federalist lines: "Not from top to bottom, nor

²¹ Dramis's unpublished autobiography, quoted in Antonio Lucarelli, "Attanasio Dramis," *Movimento Operaio* 2, nos. 7-8 (April-May 1950): 184.

²² Cerrito, "L'ideologia di Bakunin," 32-33; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 73-74; Franco Damiani, *Bakunin nell'Italia post-unitaria, 1864-1867: Anticlericalismo, democrazia, questione operaia e contadina negli anni del soggiorno di Bakunin* (Milan, 1977), 202-204.

²³ The articles are reproduced in A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:341-353.

²⁴ *Il Popolo d'Italia* (Naples), September 22, 1865.

from the center to the circumference, but from the bottom to the top and from the circumference to the center."²⁵ Bakunin also called for a radical transformation of society along antiauthoritarian and antistatist lines. To moralize human society, he explained, it was necessary to "emancipate thought from the yoke of authority and our will from the tutelage of the State."²⁶ Bakunin further observed that while the most ardent partisans of democracy had emerged from the people, the few who came from the privileged classes were all the more precious because of their social origin. Their small numbers, he said, were not a true measure of their potential contribution; Christianity had needed only twelve apostles to conquer the world. This revolutionary elite, recruited from the privileged classes and possessed with the "heroic *madness*" of intransigent faith, would constitute the "militant church of democracy." "The power of this militant church is the power of the idea," but a revolutionary elite comprising a few thousand people throughout Europe, he cautioned, lacked the material force to carry out the revolution if isolated from the people. The material force of democracy resided solely in the people, yet the people were still ignorant of their own power and democratic instincts. Once the people possessed the "*idea*," they would become omnipotent: "The single . . . holy mission of the militant church of democracy . . . is to bring the idea to the people." And once the people and enlightened democracy were united, they would become invincible.²⁷

FIRST DISCIPLES AND SECRET SOCIETIES

Although public response to his letters was imperceptible, Bakunin exchanged ideas and developed relationships over the next few months with several militant and dissatisfied representatives of southern democracy, men who would soon constitute the nucleus of his Neapolitan following and the first generation of Bakuninist anarchists in Italy. The group included the Neapolitan architect, engineer, and parliamentary deputy Giuseppe Fanelli; the Sicilian physician and deputy Saverio Friscia; the Neapolitan lawyers Carlo Gambuzzi and Alberto Tucci; the former Calabrian priest Raffaele Mileti; the veteran conspirator from San Giorgio Albanese, Attanasio Dramis; and a Neapolitan writer, Pier Vincenzo De Luca.

Their revolutionary credentials were outstanding. As a youth, Fanelli had been active in the revolutionary enterprises of 1848–1849 in Lombardy and Rome. A close friend of Pisacane, Fanelli had headed the secret revolutionary committee that was to have supported the Sapri expedition with a rising in Naples. He later fought with Garibaldi's Thousand in Sicily, and

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., October 22, 1865.

was elected to parliament in November 1865. Never a participant in parliamentary activities, Fanelli used the railroad pass that came as a perquisite of office to travel about Italy and propagandize on behalf of the movement. Friscia had been a deputy to the Sicilian parliament of 1848 and served on Mazzini's National Committee in Paris during the 1850s. After returning from exile in 1860, he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1861 and again in 1865. A thirty-third degree Freemason, Friscia would use his influence among the Sicilian lodges. Dramis had fought in 1848, collaborated with Pisacane in 1857, and was imprisoned by the Bourbons on suspicion of being an accomplice to Agesilao Milano's assassination attempt against King Ferdinando II in 1858. His revolutionary activities resulted in eight years of imprisonment between 1848 and 1860. He participated in Garibaldi's expedition when released in 1860. Of the others in the group, Raffaele Mileti and his brother Carlo had been coconspirators with Pisacane. Gambuzzi had fought with Garibaldi at Aspromonte in 1862, and De Luca had founded a society of freethinkers in Naples. Tucci's activities before Bakunin's arrival are unknown.²⁸

Several of Bakunin's new friends—Fanelli, Gambuzzi, Dramis, and Mileti—were members of the Masonic lodge Vita Nuova, and the Russian soon tried to convert the lodge to his revolutionary purposes; when this approach failed, he attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish an independent lodge.²⁹ Bakunin later rejected as absurd the idea that he had been won over to Freemasonry, explaining that "Freemasonry might perhaps still serve me as a mask or a passport, but to look to it for serious endeavor would be at least as silly as seeking consolation in wine."³⁰ Flippant disclaimers notwithstanding, Bakunin was very serious about transforming Italian Freemasonry into a revolutionary organization devoted to his program, and infiltration of lodges may have been one of Bakunin's objectives when he organized his southern democratic friends into a new secret society in February or March 1866—the Società dei Legionari della Rivoluzione Sociale Italiana, or the Italian branch of the International Revolutionary Brotherhood founded two years earlier.³¹

²⁸ For biographical information on Bakunin's Neapolitan group, see Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 86–87; A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:136–139; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 24–25; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 55–57; Lucarelli, "Attanasio Dramis," 181–187, and his *Giuseppe Fanelli nella storia del Risorgimento e del socialismo italiano* (Trani, 1952); Errico Malatesta, "Giuseppe Fanelli," *Pensiero e Volontà* (Rome), September 16, 1925, in *Scritti*, 3 vols. (Geneva and Brussels, 1934–1936), 3:187–193.

²⁹ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 22–24, 58; Gino Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia, 1860–1882* (Messina and Florence, 1958), 96–97.

³⁰ Bakunin to Alexander Herzen and Nicholas Ogarev, March 23, 1866, quoted in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 22, and M. P. Dragomanov, ed., *Correspondance de Michel Bakounine: Lettres à Herzen et à Ogareff (1860–1874)* (Paris, 1896), 209.

³¹ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 24.

The International Revolutionary Brotherhood was divided into the "International Family" and the "National Families." The former was the directing organ and the latter subordinate to its control. Modeled on the Carbonari and the Freemasons, the International Family was to be composed of honorary brothers (mainly financial supporters) and active international brothers who would conduct open propaganda as well as clandestine activities. The National Families were to be directed by an executive committee, which took orders from a central international directorate linked with the International Family. All members had to swear an oath to the Brotherhood and were subject to the society's rigorous discipline. That the hierarchical organization and authoritarian spirit of these secret societies violated his own federalist and libertarian principles does not seem to have disturbed Bakunin.³²

The *Revolutionary Catechism* and other documents outlining the program, organization, and membership requirements of the International Revolutionary Brotherhood contained Bakunin's fundamental ideas about politics and society.³³ Atheism was mandatory because "morality is totally independent of theology and divine metaphysics, and has no other source than the collective conscience of man." Members had to reject authority, love liberty and justice, and understand that "there is no liberty without equality, and that the realization of the utmost liberty in the most perfect equality . . . is justice." Because liberty is incompatible with the existence of states, members had to desire the overthrow of all states, as well as the religious, political, and social institutions that supported them. The "free human society" that would arise from the ruins should no longer be centralized and hierarchical. It must start with the free individual, the free association, and the autonomous commune, and be organized from bottom to top, from circumference to center, by means of free federation. Members had to be federalists, therefore, and renounce the principle of nationality. Bakunin also required that members be socialists. Labor is the "sole producer of social wealth," so "whoever enjoys it without working is an exploiter of the work of others." Labor is the "fundamental basis of human dignity, the unique means by which man truly wins and creates his liberty"; therefore, "*all political and social rights must in the future belong only to those who work.*" It

³² For the organization, rules, and regulations of the Brotherhood, see Michael Bakunin, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Max Nettlau, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1921–1924), 3:29–30, 36–49, 54–66.

³³ The four principal documents were the *Revolutionary Catechism*, the *International Family*, the *National Family*, and the program of the Società dei Legionari della Rivoluzione Sociale Italiana, which was similar in content to that of its parent organization. The *Revolutionary Catechism* is the most extensive of the four documents; however, the *International Family* is sufficient for purposes of tracing the evolution of Bakunin's ideas. For an English translation of the *Revolutionary Catechism* and the *International Family*, see *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 64–93. The other documents are reproduced in *Scritti editi ed inediti di Michele Bakunin*, ed. Pier Carlo Masini, (Bergamo, 1963), vol. 3, *Scritti napoletani (1865–1867)*, 89–98.

followed, therefore, that members had to renounce hereditary ownership and the law of succession.³⁴

Members had to commit themselves totally to the revolution, because a complete transformation of society could only be accomplished through violence. Taking aim at Mazzini, Bakunin argued that political revolution alone constituted "a retrograde, harmful, counterrevolutionary movement" that could only work against the people. Salvation was attainable only by means of a European and ultimately worldwide social revolution. The revolution would be assisted and largely organized by "that intelligent and genuinely noble section of youth whose open-hearted convictions and burning aspirations lead it to embrace the cause of the people despite being born into the privileged classes," but "in the long run it will only come through the people." "Once the social revolution breaks," he predicted, "it will find . . . allies in the popular masses, who will . . . rally to its banner as soon as they understand . . . its activities and purpose."³⁵

Writing to Alexander Herzen and Nicholas Ogarev in July 1866, Bakunin claimed that the secret Brotherhood had adherents in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Belgium, France, Spain, and Italy, as well as among Polish and Russian exiles. In Italy, he added, most of the Mazzinian organizations in the south were transferring their support to the Brotherhood, and the lower classes of the Mezzogiorno were coming over to him en masse.³⁶ The expansion of the Brotherhood described to Herzen and Ogarev reflected Bakunin's propensity for gross exaggeration. Although a Bakunist secret society, comprising his closest disciples in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, France, and other western European countries, would exist in one manifestation or another until his death a decade later, the International Revolutionary Brotherhood was largely a phantom organization in the summer of 1866, existing only in the form of the small group of Neapolitan democrats who constituted the central committee of the Italian branch, plus a few sections of the secret society in Sicily and Florence.³⁷ Yet to dismiss Bakunin's Brotherhood as unimportant because its membership was so miniscule would be a mistake. The Brotherhood was vital to the development of anarchism in Italy and Europe because its programs were important vehicles for the transmission of Bakunin's ideas.³⁸ One of Bakunin's biographers, in fact, considered the *Revolutionary Catechism* to be the spiritual foundation of modern anarchism.³⁹

³⁴ *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 87–90.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–92.

³⁶ Bakunin to Herzen and Ogarev, July 19, 1866, in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 215.

³⁷ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 64–65, 69–70.

³⁸ Lehning, "Bakunin's 'Secret Societies,'" 57.

³⁹ Kaminski, *Bakunin*, 206–207.

LA SITUAZIONE ITALIANA

Bakunin faced new obstacles, meanwhile. Still retarding the growth of the Italian socialist movement—anarchists in the 1860s referred to themselves as “socialists”—was the “detestable theory of bourgeois patriotism” that Bakunin had criticized so sharply in the *Revolutionary Catechism* and other secret society documents. When Italy went to war to wrest the Veneto from Austria in June 1866, Fanelli, Gambuzzi, and Mileti—despite their membership in the Brotherhood, their professed allegiance to its antistatist and antinationalist program, and the opposition of Bakunin, Friscia, and Tucci—volunteered to fight with Garibaldi in the Tyrolian campaign. Having achieved nothing in the war, Fanelli, Gambuzzi, and Mileti resumed their places within Bakunin’s inner circle after hostilities ended. Several leaders of the Palermo section, who had also broken ranks with the Brotherhood to fight for Italy, returned to the republican fold.⁴⁰

The war of 1866 indirectly helped Bakunin’s campaign against Mazzinianism in southern Italy. By supporting the House of Savoy’s opportunistic war, which brought Italy military defeat and humiliation as well the Veneto, Mazzini and Garibaldi seriously damaged the republican cause. But in the face of mounting criticism Mazzini refused to take the one measure that would have reestablished his control—addressing the social question. Instead, he lashed out at the men and the ideas he considered threatening to his formula of Dio e Popolo, denouncing Bakunin in a manifesto to his friends in Naples and Sicily. On September 1, 1866, he created the *Alleanza Universale Repubblicana* to quell dissension among his followers and to prevent the International Workingmen’s Association from winning adherents among Europe’s republican workers.⁴¹

Bakunin took advantage of the postwar disillusionment to escalate his critique of Mazzinianism in *La Situazione Italiana*, a pamphlet published clandestinely in Naples in October 1866.⁴² One of the crucial documents of Bakunin’s Italian sojourn, *La Situazione Italiana* was a collaborative effort, written by Alberto Tucci but with principal input from Bakunin.⁴³ It

⁴⁰ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 66–75.

⁴¹ Bakunin to Herzen and Ogarev, July 19, 1866, in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 215; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 74–75; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 97.

⁴² Reproduced in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 77–93, and *Scritti editi e inediti di Michele Bakunin*, ed. Pier Carlo Masini (Bergamo, 1961) vol. 2, *Ritratto dell'Italia borghese (1866–1871)*, 17–34.

⁴³ In keeping with their tendency to minimize or dismiss Bakunin’s influence among the Neapolitans, Hostetter (*Italian Socialist Movement*, 99) attributes *La Situazione Italiana* to Pisacane’s influence, while A. Romano (*Storia*, 1:179–180) insists that Tucci wrote the pamphlet without any help from the Russian. Other scholars have substantiated Nettlau’s original conclusion that the pamphlet was a collaborative effort, with Bakunin the main contributor.

praised Mazzini for having roused Italy from its ancient torpor, but castigated the "Virtuous Genius" for his religious and nationalist doctrines, asserting that he had never been a true revolutionary because "he has always wanted *the People for Italy* and not *Italy for the People*."⁴⁴ His action had always been irrelevant to the masses because his program consigned the solution of social problems to a centuries-long process, thus forcing him into alliances with the conservative elements of Italian society, including the king. According to the pamphlet, Mazzini's gradualist approach and misalliances were also responsible for the inability of republican action to accomplish great deeds, as well the demoralization of the republican party itself. Nor would the lot of the Italian masses improve if a republic replaced the monarchy, since liberty and justice were empty words in the Mazzinian program.⁴⁵

La Situazione Italiana went on to attack Garibaldi. Although personally fond of Garibaldi, Bakunin had become exasperated with his ideological fickleness and contradictory behavior. In March 1866, with war approaching, he expressed his fear that "Garibaldi is letting himself be seduced for the tenth time and is becoming, in the hands of you know who [Mazzini], an instrument for deceiving the people."⁴⁶ His contribution to the war effort and his docile obedience to the crown convinced Bakunin that Garibaldi, like Mazzini, had betrayed the Italian popular cause. "Garibaldianism," *La Situazione Italiana* declared, "today has fallen, and with it has also fallen all the magical influence that its head has exercised in Italy." The name of Garibaldi is still honored, but "will no longer stir a thrill from one end of the Peninsula to the other, nor will it be capable, as it once was, of calling to arms an entire people knowing neither why nor where." Garibaldianism had fallen because, as the sword of Mazzinianism, it had no concept of its own, and once separated from Mazzini went from bad to worse—"into the arms of the Monarchy, which solicited and welcomed it like a mother and then treated it as would a stepmother, killing and dishonoring it." From revolutionism, Bakunin charged, Garibaldianism had descended to revolutionary militarism and finally to outright militarism, as the last war demonstrated.⁴⁷

There was only one force, according to *La Situazione Italiana*, that could

Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 77; Masini's preface to *Scritti editi e inediti di Michele Bakunin*, 2:9–15; Scirocco, *Democrazia e socialismo a Napoli*, 189–190; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 60–62, 255.

⁴⁴ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 83–84.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 84–85.

⁴⁶ Bakunin to Herzen and Ogarev, March 23, 1866, in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 210–211.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 85–86.

make the "omnipotent revolution of the future and create a free Italy," and "that force is the real Italian people." Having none of the rights gained by the bourgeoisie, the peasants and workers would not rise up in the name of unity and national greatness but only for an idea they understood—Justice. Italy would become free only by means of a popular revolution that destroyed the three tyrannies that had oppressed and brutalized the people for centuries: the church, the centralized state, and social privilege. The revolution, Bakunin predicted, would be terrible, respecting neither men nor things, but it was a necessity nonetheless.⁴⁸

La Situazione Italiana contained nothing that Bakunin had not already expounded in the *Revolutionary Catechism* and in his letters to *Il Popolo d'Italia*. But this was a collaborative enterprise that expressed not only Bakunin's position but that of the Neapolitan dissidents who either contributed to or endorsed it. Following Bakunin's lead, the group had taken the unprecedented step of openly attacking Garibaldi as well as Mazzini. Most significant, Bakunin's friends had rejected Mazzini's insistence on class cooperation and gradualism. By accepting the belief that the Italian masses had to emancipate themselves by means of violent revolution against church, state, and private property, Bakunin's Neapolitan comrades were on their way to becoming anarchist socialists.⁴⁹

LIBERTÀ E GIUSTIZIA

Bakunin's Neapolitan circle had grown by 1867, owing to the success of his propaganda and the events of the preceding year, and in January or February of 1867 the group reconstituted itself into a new association called *Libertà e Giustizia*. Although its main architect, Bakunin feared arrest and expulsion if he played an open role, so leadership of the group was assumed by Friscia, Fanelli, Gambuzzi, and De Luca. Anticipating the parliamentary elections of 1867, *Libertà e Giustizia* issued an electoral manifesto on February 27, calling for universal suffrage; the right to recall deputies; a senate elected by provincial councils; freedom of the press, association, religion, and education; a single, direct income tax; replacement of the standing army with a people's militia; and abolition of the police and state bureaucracy. A revised version of the manifesto was adopted in March as the official program of *Libertà e Giustizia*. The stated goal of the association—reconstituted again in April under the same leadership—was "the religious, political, and social emancipation of the people and the realization of their moral and material well-being." The means by which *Libertà e Giustizia*

⁴⁸ Ibid., 86–93.

⁴⁹ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 188; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 103; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 60.

intended to achieve these objectives were the “the Press, the Lecture, and Association.”⁵⁰

That *Libertà e Giustizia* made no mention of socialism or revolution was purely intention. By portraying the organization as one that would pursue democratic reforms by means of legal and open propaganda, Bakunin and his comrades hoped to attract democratic associations with revolutionary potential and convert them to their own purposes. Yet they established such stringent membership requirements—no government employees, for example—that many organizations and individuals were prevented from joining. *Libertà e Giustizia* never numbered more than forty members, therefore, and only a minority of these were active.⁵¹

The most important accomplishment of *Libertà e Giustizia* was the publication of a newspaper—bearing the same name—between August 17 and December 24, 1867. Sixteen issues appeared before financial difficulties and police confiscations forced the group to abandon the effort. Most of the articles were written by the editor, De Luca, and reflected the influence of Bakunin’s political and social program. Bakunin himself contributed a series of articles on slavery and religion. In one of them, after condemning pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, and all other pan-isms as negations of humanity, Bakunin declared publicly for the first time: “*I am an anarchist.*”⁵²

Early in September 1867, Bakunin had left the island of Ischia, where he had been living since May to avoid police detection, and journeyed to Geneva to attend the inaugural congress of the League for Peace and Liberty. His departure had been prompted by several factors. Bakunin was eager to resume collaboration with Herzen and Ogarev, who had transferred *Kolokol* (The Bell)—the great organ of Russian populism—from London to Geneva. Geneva was also close to the new residence of Princess Zoe Obolenskii, Bakunin’s generous benefactress, and provided a safer haven than Naples. Always fearful of being deported back to Russia, Bakunin had decided to quit Naples after reports reached him that the local prefect was planning to file charges against him at the behest of the new Russian ambassador, the same official who had been responsible for his expulsion from France in 1847. He did not return to Italy until 1876.⁵³

How important was Bakunin’s Neapolitan sojourn to the rise of anarchism in Italy? The testimony of veteran anarchists like Carmelo Palladino

⁵⁰ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, 100–107, includes the complete text; Scirocco, *Democrazia e socialismo a Napoli*, 336–337.

⁵¹ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, 106, 108, 111; Scirocco, *Democrazia e socialismo a Napoli*, 192–195, 336–338; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 64–65.

⁵² *Libertà e Giustizia* (Naples), August 23 and September 8, 1867, quoted in Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani: da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 27.

⁵³ Bakunin to Herzen, May 23 and June 23, 1867, in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 265, 270–271; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, 113–144; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 73–74.

and Errico Malatesta, who received their socialist education in Bakunin's Neapolitan circle a few years after his departure, provides the answer. Palladino stated that "Michael was the first to cast the seeds of revolutionary socialism (the authoritarians [Marxists] never made headway in Naples) and to promote reading and research of the works of Proudhon."⁵⁴ Malatesta's assessment was more comprehensive and insightful. Of paramount importance was Bakunin's radical challenge to all the social, political, and patriotic dogmas previously considered sacred and indisputable. This challenge prompted great discussion of Bakunin's ideas in Neapolitan intellectual circles, with opinion dividing for and against:

For some Bakunin was the barbarian from the North, without God and without Country, without respect for anything sacred, who constituted a menace to holy Italian and Latin civilization. For others he was the man who brought a breath of healthy air to the dead millpond of Neapolitan traditions, who opened the eyes of the youths who approached him to vast new horizons. And these—Fanelli, De Luca, Gambuzzi, Tucci, Palladino, etc.—were the first socialists, the first internationalists, the first anarchists of Naples and of Italy.⁵⁵

It is significant that neither Palladino nor Malatesta, two anarchists with intimate knowledge of the Neapolitan revolutionary milieu, ever attributed to the members of Bakunin's inner circle any role other than that of disciple, or credited any Italian socialist precursor, such as Pisacane, with an influence distinct from or equal to Bakunin's. Thus it was Bakunin who breached the citadel of Mazzinian dogma and enabled libertarian socialism to establish a beachhead on Italian soil. And it was Bakunin's ideas and methods, developed during his Italian sojourn, that constituted the basis for anarchist thought and action throughout the coming decade.

BAKUNIN'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, 1867–1869

Bakunin utilized the liberties afforded by the Swiss Republic to embark upon several enterprises aimed at promoting social revolution. In September 1867, he joined the League for Peace and Liberty, an organization founded by Europe's most prominent liberals and democrats—John Stuart Mill, Victor Hugo, Giuseppe Garibaldi—in hopes of forestalling war between France and Prussia and creating a United States of Europe. That its program was bourgeois and pacifist did not dissuade Bakunin from using the League as a forum for his revolutionary ideas, and at the Geneva Con-

⁵⁴ Carmelo Palladino to Andrea Costa, October 1, 1876, in Franco Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo nel Risorgimento* (Rome, 1965), 406.

⁵⁵ Errico Malatesta, "Il mio primo incontro con Bakunin," *Pensiero e Volontà* (Rome), July 1, 1926, in his *Scritti*, 3:245–246.

gress on September 9, 1867, he denounced nationalism and called for the destruction of centralized states. None of the positions he advanced at Geneva was accepted, but Bakunin persisted in believing he could convert the League to his thinking and secured appointment to the central committee in order to shape the program for the next congress.⁵⁶

When the League convened in Bern on September 21, 1868, the delegates accused Bakunin of being a communist for advocating the economic and social equalization of classes and individuals. Outraged that he should be identified with authoritarian communists like Marx, Bakunin declared on September 23 that he was a collectivist, not a communist:

I hate communism because it is the negation of liberty. . . . I am not a communist because communism . . . causes all the powers of society to be swallowed up by the State, because it leads necessarily to the centralization of property in the hands of the State, whereas I want the abolition of the State. . . .⁵⁷

Without mentioning the word *anarchist*, Bakunin had delivered his first espousal of anarchist collectivism at an international forum. But the distinction between authoritarian communism and anarchist collectivism was lost on the bourgeois liberals, who defeated Bakunin's resolution before terminating the proceedings. Realizing, finally, that social revolution could not be promoted through a liberal pacifist organization, Bakunin and his international band of disciples withdrew from the League.⁵⁸

Bakunin's attention shifted next to the International Workingmen's Association. In 1864, Bakunin had done nothing to establish the International in Italy because the fledgling association had few working-class members and evidenced little revolutionary capability. Four years later, the International had acquired a significant following among the proletariat of France, Belgium, and Switzerland, and Bakunin viewed its revolutionary potential in a different light. He joined the Geneva section in the summer of 1868, harboring designs to contest Marx for leadership. Bakunin's strategy called for an alliance between the International and some revolutionary organization under his control. Before quitting, Bakunin had tried to forge an alliance between the League for Peace and Liberty and the International, but the IWA's General Council in London, which Marx controlled, rejected the idea.⁵⁹

Bakunin proceeded with his plans for indirect conquest of the IWA by

⁵⁶ To influence the League, Bakunin wrote *Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism: Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Liberty*, a lengthy but unfinished reformulation of his program that represented his most important theoretical writing of the period. For excerpts, see *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 94–110, and *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (New York, 1971), 103–147.

⁵⁷ Quoted in James Guillaume, *L'Internationale: Documents et souvenirs (1864–1878)*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1905–1910), 1:74–75, and Carr, *Bakunin*, 356.

⁵⁸ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 1:75–76; Carr, *Bakunin*, 341–358.

⁵⁹ Carr, *Bakunin*, 351–152.

organizing the former socialist faction of the League into a new revolutionary organization called the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy. He and his closest associates established sections or committees of the Alliance in Geneva, Barcelona, Madrid, Lyon, Marseilles, Naples, and Sicily. Geneva was the most important section and home base for the central bureau, which operated under Bakunin's personal leadership. More explicitly anarchist than the Brotherhood and more radical than the International, the Alliance espoused militant atheism, federalism, and socialism, rejected patriotism and national rivalry, and called for the abolition of national states and their replacement by a universal union of free agricultural and industrial associations. The Alliance also demanded the collectivization of land and all instruments of production; the political, economic, and social equalization of classes and sexes; the abolition of the right of inheritance; and equal education for all. These fundamental objectives of Bakunin's anarchist collectivism were soon to be embraced by revolutionary anarchists throughout Europe.⁶⁰

Bakunin intended the members of the Alliance to join the International en masse, while maintaining the Alliance as a secret society within. Once admitted, the Alliance members would promote Bakunin's revolutionary program and serve as the aristocracy or general staff of the workers' movement. But Bakunin's French and Italian comrades disagreed with the scheme, preferring the Alliance to remain independent of the International and to operate as a public organization. A compromise was reached whereby the Alliance would enter the International as a body but would operate as a public organization. But Marx knew a Trojan horse when he saw one, and permission for the Alliance to join the International as a bloc was denied by the London General Council on December 22, 1868.

The Alliance officially dissolved itself in June 1869, after negotiating an agreement with the General Council permitting its sections to reconstitute themselves as IWA sections so long as the phrase "abolition of classes" replaced "equalization of classes" in their program. The Alliance's Geneva section was admitted to the International on July 22, 1869. Others, especially in Spain, where the Alliance had recruited a significant following, followed suit. The Alliance thus succeeded in entering the International, albeit not as originally planned. Its leadership, however, may have sought to function as a secret society within that body, replacing the International Revolutionary Brotherhood that had dissolved in March 1869 amidst internal dissension. Bakunin's challenge to Marx for leadership of the international socialist movement would soon follow.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For the Alliance's formation and program, see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 1:132-133; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 373-375n. 1; George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland and New York, 1962), 166-168.

⁶¹ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 1:78-79; Carr, *Bakunin*, 359-374; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 373-377; Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 261n. 1.

THE RISE OF THE NEAPOLITAN SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

Bakunin's international endeavors had been assisted by Gambuzzi, Fanelli, Friscia, and Tucci, who were key members of the International Revolutionary Brotherhood. Gambuzzi and Friscia attended the Geneva Congress of the League for Peace and Liberty in September 1867 and were joined by Fanelli and Tucci at the Bern Congress in September 1868. When Bakunin created the Internatinal Alliance of Socialist Democracy, the Italians were again called upon to play the role of organizers and propagandists. Fanelli, for example, undertook a proselytizing mission to Spain in November 1868 that contributed to the rise of anarchism in that country. Exposure to the crosscurrents of European democracy and socialism undoubtedly broadened the political perspective of the Naples group and helped the nascent movement in Italy establish ties with Bakuninist elements elsewhere in Europe. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Naples group achieved only modest success in advancing their cause in Italy after Bakunin's departure. No one could replace Bakunin as a leader and propagandist, and without his guiding presence the group was weakened by inconsistent behavior, intermittent bouts of inertia, and internal discord.⁶²

Nationalism remained a persistent problem. Yielding to patriotic impulses, Fanelli and Gambuzzi defied Bakunin's wishes and assisted in the preparation of Garibaldi's latest campaign to liberate Rome, an ill-conceived adventure that ended in bloody defeat at Mentana on November 3, 1867. Even this debacle failed to extinguish Gambuzzi's attraction for *Garibaldianism*, and after Louis Napoleon's empire was defeated by the Prussians in September 1870, Bakunin had to dissuade Gambuzzi from enlisting with Garibaldi's volunteers to defend the French Republic.

Bakunin was equally exasperated by the group's failure to initiate activity on behalf of the Alliance. De Luca, the only member of the Neapolitan group who possessed journalistic ability, had cause for inertia—he was seriously ill and would die in May 1868. His absence and a lack of funds prevented the group from publishing a newspaper until November 1869. Operating without a propaganda vehicle for nearly two years seriously retarded the movement's development.⁶³

The only propaganda piece the Neapolitan group generated during this period was *La Situazione-2*, a clandestine pamphlet that Tucci and Bakunin had written in the autumn of 1868. *La Situazione-2* resumed the attack against Mazzini and Garibaldi—the defeat at Mentana having provided new ammunition—and renewed the call for social revolution based on

⁶² Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 112, 124, 148–152; Carr, *Bakunin*, 349, 358, 363–364; George R. Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain, 1868–1898* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), 15–17, 35–36.

⁶³ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 110–11, 118–120, 187–189.

atheism, socialism, and federalism.⁶⁴ But *La Situazione-2* proved to be Tucci's swan song as a member of Bakunin's intimate circle. He and Gambuzzi, never on good terms, ceased to collaborate for about a year. Tucci then antagonized Bakunin by refusing to conduct a propaganda tour of Spain. The usually tolerant Bakunin never forgave Tucci, and the young lawyer was unable to play a significant role in local activities until 1870. The group was further weakened when Mileti, Dramis, and Fanelli became inactive. Mileti and Dramis succumbed to lethargy, while Fanelli withdrew from active service as a result of wounded pride. Fanelli had undertaken the propaganda tour in Spain refused by Tucci, but became annoyed with Bakunin because the funds he provided were limited. Bakunin later explained that "Fanelli has become tired and still cannot forget that by not sending those two hundred *francs* we injured his dignity, but he is always ours and with us."⁶⁵ The estrangement was not permanent, however, and Fanelli eventually resumed active participation.⁶⁶

Beginning in November 1868, when Bakunin intensified his campaign to establish the Alliance in Italy, his principal collaborators were Gambuzzi and Friscia. Gambuzzi formed a central committee and office of the Alliance in Naples. Friscia, working among friends and through the Sicilian Masonic lodges, laid the groundwork for sections in Sciacca, Catania, Girgenti, and Caltanissetta. Thanks to their efforts, leadership of the first Italian section of the International, officially constituted in Naples on January 31, 1869, was in the hands of Alliance militants faithful to Bakunin rather than to Marx. Gambuzzi was the guiding spirit of the Neapolitan section, although Stefano Caporusso, an ex-Mazzinian tailor and local labor leader who had joined Bakunin's circle in 1866, was elected president. Caporusso initially recruited about four hundred workers for the section, and after he facilitated settlement of strikes by leather and dockyard workers in November and December, the prestige of the International rose, boosting membership to more than three thousand by early 1870. Another section of five hundred members was formed soon thereafter in Castellamare di Stabia, the ship-building center outside of Naples. Meanwhile, the Neapolitan section's official newspaper, *L'Eguaglianza*, had first appeared on November 5, 1869.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ For *La Situazione-2*, see *ibid.*, 132–142, and *Scritti editi e inediti di Michele Bakunin*, 2:35–48.

⁶⁵ Bakunin to Valerien Mroczkowski, August 1, 1870, quoted in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 152. Fanelli's sense of bourgeois propriety was legendary among Neapolitan anarchists.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 131–132, 148–153, 161–162.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 153–156, 167–170. Nettlau's account of the founding of the IWA in Naples was based on interviews conducted with Gambuzzi and Tucci in 1899. Also essential is Carmelo Palladino's "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori," a report of November 13, 1871, to Friedrich Engels, who was corresponding

The rapid growth of the International alarmed the rich and powerful of Naples. First the prefect suppressed *L'Equaglianza* in January 1870. Then Caporusso provided him with further pretext for action. Regarding the Naples section as his personal fiefdom, Caporusso led the leather workers in a protest strike that February, despite the opposition of other internationalists concerned over a lack of funds. Under Italian law, it was a prefect's prerogative to decide whether the strikers' grievances met the legal criteria of "reasonable cause." Consequently, on February 6 the prefect ordered the arrest of Caporusso, Gambuzzi, and several workers, as well as the confiscation of the section's records. Caporusso and a few others were sentenced to a month's imprisonment; Gambuzzi, whom the authorities were really hoping to net, was absolved.⁶⁸

Gambuzzi quickly rallied the workers who had quit the section after the unsuccessful strike and arrests, thereby antagonizing Caporusso, who emerged from prison determined to impose his will upon the section. To eliminate his rival, Caporusso denounced Gambuzzi as a police agent to the International's Federal Committee in Geneva. As Gambuzzi was a trusted internationalist, the Committee suspected Caporusso of being the agent provocateur. Subsequent revelations that his charges were false, combined with proof that he had appropriated defense funds, resulted in Caporusso's expulsion from the International. After the prefect's attempt to gain control of the section through a paid agent was thwarted, the Neapolitan workers elected Antonio Giustiniani, a ceramic sculptor and former managing editor of *L'Equaglianza*, as their new president on July 10, 1870.⁶⁹

The Neapolitan section survived these early travails, but for the rest of 1870 its leaders were hard-pressed to reorganize a dwindling and dispirited rank and file. The handful of sections that Friscia had organized in Sicily still clung to a precarious existence, isolated and without representation from the working class. Elsewhere in Italy the International did not exist.⁷⁰

secretary of the General Council for Italy. See *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza con italiani, 1848-1895*, ed. Giuseppe Del Bo (Milan, 1964), 62-74.

⁶⁸ Palladino, "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana," 62-67. Also A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:331-332; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 86-91.

⁶⁹ Palladino, "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana," 67-69; A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:333-336; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 91-92.

⁷⁰ Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 112-113; A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:337-338.

THE RISE OF THE INTERNATIONAL IN ITALY, 1870–1872

PROSPECTS FOR GROWTH

The growth of the International in Italy would depend upon the receptiveness of three social elements: peasants struggling against the rising financial impositions of the liberal state; urban workers and artisans waging more strikes and organizing nascent labor associations; and revolutionary middle-class youths disillusioned with the outcome of the Risorgimento.¹

Confronted with a huge budgetary deficit, Finance Minister Quintino Sella—soon known as “the starver of the people”—introduced a milling tax on grain (the *macinato*) at the end of December 1868. The *macinato* placed a crushing burden on the peasants, who were already suffering the effects of a poor harvest. Thousands of peasants in Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto, Emilia, Romagna, and Tuscany arose in spontaneous protest, converging upon local town halls, and when their pleas fell on deaf ears, they stormed the buildings, burned official records, and destroyed the new counting devices at the mills. Homes of the rich were occasionally sacked, and barricades erected to resist the *carabinieri* and soldiers. Ultimately, these peasant revolts were ineffective because they lacked leadership and direction, although in a few cases they were encouraged by clerico-reactionary or republican elements who hoped the rebellion might lead to the overthrow of the monarchy. Military forces suppressed the revolt by mid-February 1869, leaving 257 peasants dead, 1099 wounded, and 3,788 arrested.²

Urban workers had refrained from joining the peasants in revolt. Their lack of solidarity has been attributed to the city dwellers' traditional antagonism toward the countryside; the workers' intuitive sense that peasant uprisings might benefit clerico-reactionary elements; and their greater awareness that uncoordinated rebellion was futile. Many workers and artisans also believed that the real enemy was not the form of government—conditions had remained unchanged since unification—but the social order, against

¹ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 44.

² Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 229–236. A few demonstrations occurred in Puglia, Basilicata, and Molise, but because the peasants of the Mezzogiorno had endured the *macinato* under the Bourbons, the upheavals were not as widespread as in the north.

which their only effective weapons were economic resistance and better organization. Thus Italian workers in several northern industrial cities had begun to agitate for higher wages to offset inflation even before the *macinato* was imposed. Workers from the arsenals, railroads, and tobacco factories in Piedmont struck early in April 1868. That same month the workers of Bologna conducted a two-day general strike, which authorities broke with mass arrests and the dissolution of workers' societies. Milan, Pavia, Livorno, Pistoia, and other cities experienced strikes in May. Increasing strike action was accompanied by the growth of worker organizations: 573 in 1867, 771 in 1869. Most were mutual aid societies, but some were evolving into leagues of resistance or prototrade unions.³

The big question of the late 1860s was whether the increasing militancy of the workers could be channeled into revolutionary action or would continue to focus on demands for higher wages and better working conditions. Mazzini had acquired a minority following among workers' societies in the early 1860s, and his republican doctrine contributed to the awakening of their political and social consciousness. But Mazzini failed to organize the workers' societies into a political force and virtually ignored them after 1864. Despite this neglect, Mazzini could not entertain the possibility that workers might reject republicanism as a panacea and accept the socialist doctrine of class struggle rather than his own dogma of class collaboration. Thus, with Mazzini's control over the leftwing of the labor movement having become tenuous by 1870, the door was now open for socialism to make inroads among this constituency.⁴

Republican ranks were even more vulnerable to defection by young middle-class militants. Garibaldi's defeat at Mentana in 1867 had disillusioned many because it demonstrated the ineffectiveness of Mazzinian agitation and Garibaldian expeditions. The *macinato* revolt created further dismay. Radical young republicans assumed that the peasant revolts would prompt Mazzini's signal for revolution, but Mazzini believed that material discontent might cause disturbances but not revolutions, and when the *macinato* riots erupted he did nothing. Other veteran leaders of the republican party, who had always preached Mazzini's belief in popular-based revolution, also shrank from leading a rebellion of ignorant and enraged peasants. Some of the youngest militants, in contrast, tried to seize the initiative by forming secret committees to channel peasant rebellion toward revolutionary ends. They had concluded that only a vast social and political upheaval—one far greater than anything advocated by Mazzini and Garibaldi—could resolve Italy's problems. From this small but militant

³ Ibid., 218–219, 236, 245; Humbert L. Gualtieri, *The Labor Movement in Italy* (New York, 1946), 73–74.

⁴ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 50–69, 137.

contingent of young republicans, the International in Italy would soon attract its most important leaders.⁵

THE PARIS COMMUNE

Before any appreciable number of dissatisfied young republicans would embrace socialism, Mazzini's still powerful position as the prophet and moral leader of the Italian democratic left had to be substantially weakened. Although inevitable, Mazzini's decline was rapidly hastened by two events that redirected the course of European history: the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. The backdoor seizure of Rome by Piedmontese forces on September 20, 1870, following the withdrawal of French troops who protected Pope Pius IX, wrote an inglorious end to the Risorgimento. But the patriotic imperative that had kept so many republicans faithful to Mazzini was satisfied. And with unification complete and nationalism less compelling, young militants might now turn to the movement that promised immediate resolution of the social question through heroic action. What accelerated the process so precipitously, however, was the Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune was the great awakener of political passion and social consciousness for almost all the young founders of the Italian International, the immediate catalyst for their conversion to socialism. Andrea Costa recalled its dramatic impact:

. . . it was the Paris Commune above all that revealed to the Italian people that there were other and more serious problems to discuss than those which had previously occupied them. . . .

It was on the cadaver of the Commune—fecund in its ruins—that we pledged ourselves to the struggle between the old spirit and the new; it was from the blood of the slain Communards that the omens were drawn. . . .

The rapidity with which the new spirit was propagated in Italy was marvelous. . . . We threw ourselves into that movement, driven much more by the desire to break with a past that oppressed us and did not correspond, that had never corresponded, to our aspirations than by conscious reflection on what we wanted. We felt the future was there. Time would determine which general ideas inspired us.⁶

Italian revolutionaries had limited knowledge and understanding of what was happening in Paris in the spring of 1871. But that very ignorance, Errico Malatesta explained, permitted them to give free rein to their imag-

⁵ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 207–208, 232, 242–245, 255–257; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 129.

⁶ Andrea Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo: Ricordi storici* (Florence, 1900), 11.

ination and to fashion an image of the Commune that corresponded to their own ideals. They envisioned the revolt of the Parisian workers as a heroic struggle for social justice and emancipation, a socialist experiment directed by the International Workingmen's Association. Because of this erroneous attribution, the popularity of the International rose swiftly within their circles, and defections mounted.⁷

MAZZINI VERSUS THE PARIS COMMUNE AND THE INTERNATIONAL

It was Mazzini himself who undermined the republican cause and drove many democrats into the International by condemning the Commune and the socialists. The Paris Commune embodied everything he hated: atheism, materialism, class struggle, mass violence. The vehemence of his attacks, however, derived from his belief that the Commune posed a threat to his political program. Italian conservatives argued that the excesses of the Commune were the inevitable consequence of republicanism, so if Mazzini and his party were not stopped, Italy would soon have its own Commune. Concerned that such fears might alienate his bourgeois supporters, Mazzini set out to demonstrate that a gulf separated his republicanism from the collectivist and federalist principles of the Communards. Beginning in April 1871, scarcely an issue of his new journal, *La Roma del Popolo*, was published without an article attacking the Commune.⁸

To republicans enthralled by the Parisian revolt, Mazzini's condemnation was indefensible, proving conclusively that his ideas were irrelevant or reactionary. And rather than dampen enthusiasm for the Commune, Mazzini's hostile pronouncements achieved the opposite effect. "It was Mazzini above all," Costa recalled, "who alienated the warmest and most generous part of the [republican] youth, raised on the new science, by raging against the fallen Commune and by attributing the ruin of France mostly to materialistic theories."⁹

Equally counterproductive was Mazzini's summer offensive against the International, which he considered another threat to his influence. Mazzini thought he could squelch sympathy for the International by revealing that the IWA's doctrine was based on the negation of God, country, and private property. These charges did not persuade dissatisfied republicans to shun

⁷ Malatesta's preface to Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, xxi-xxii.

⁸ For Mazzini's attacks, see Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 284-295; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 204-207; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 146-154; Aldo Romano, *Storia del movimento socialista in Italia*, (Milan and Rome, 1954), vol. 2, *La crisi della Prima Internazionale (1871-1872)*, 61-76; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 98-100.

⁹ Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 11.

the International, however. Young revolutionaries steeped in materialist philosophy, they continued to support the International and voiced their resentment of Mazzini's religious dogmatism and authoritarian approach to every question. Nevertheless, so strong was Mazzini's authority and the loyalty he commanded, that the majority of dissident republicans still shrank from breaking with him. It required the intervention of Bakunin and Garibaldi to permanently undermine Mazzini and win his disillusioned followers for the International.¹⁰

BAKUNIN AND GARIBALDI TURN THE TIDE

Bakunin had regarded the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of Louis Napoleon as an opportunity to transform a war between states into a civil war for the social revolution.¹¹ Lured by the prospect of a workers' uprising, Bakunin journeyed to Lyon in mid-September only to participate in the collapse of the insurrectionary movement at the end of the month. Luckily he returned to Locarno, for if he had participated in the Parisian revolt the next spring, he surely would have been executed together with thousands of other Communards. Of course, Bakunin ardently supported the Commune, conceiving it as a powerful symbol of oppression in the imagination of the European proletariat and "a bold and outspoken negation of the State."¹²

Strangely enough, Bakunin soon found his position in Italy strengthened indirectly by Mazzini's critiques of the Paris Commune and the International. Unfamiliar with its program, Mazzini had attacked the International for its alleged atheist, federalist, and antipolitical doctrines, thereby identifying the International with the libertarian socialism of Bakunin rather than with the authoritarian socialism of Marx and Engels. But Italian republicans were no more knowledgeable about the doctrinal differences separating Bakunin and Marx than was Mazzini. Consequently, among the young republicans who rejected Mazzini's critique and continued to support the International, it was Bakunin's prestige that rose and his doctrines that received attention, much to the dismay of Marx and Engels.¹³ Thus an

¹⁰ For Mazzini's attacks against the International, and republican responses to them, see Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 321–323; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 149–156; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 99–100, 103–108.

¹¹ See Bakunin's "Letter to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 183–217.

¹² "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," in Lehning, *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 199.

¹³ An indignant Engels would protest Mazzini's erroneous attribution of Bakuninist doctrines to the International in a letter of December 5, 1871, to *La Roma del Popolo*. See Marx & Engels: *Corrispondenza*, 113–114.

unequalled opportunity presented itself to Bakunin both to undermine Mazzini and to thwart Marx's hope of extending the authority of the General Council to Italy.¹⁴ He lost no time seizing it.

In mid-August 1871, Bakunin published a pamphlet entitled *Risposta d'un Internazionale a Giuseppe Mazzini, per M. Bakounine, membro dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori*, accusing Mazzini of theological authoritarianism and reactionism. Loath to attack "one of the noblest, purest personalities of this century," Bakunin claimed he was duty bound nevertheless to reveal the hypocrisy and falsity of Mazzini's revolutionary program. As a member of the "cult of God," Mazzini the revolutionary had been transformed into "the last high priest of an obsolescent religious, metaphysical, and political idealism." Over the decades, his revolutionary instincts had become suppressed by the logic of his religious convictions, placing him now among the powerful and privileged who marched under the banner of God. Mazzini's savage attacks against atheism and materialism, therefore, merely confirmed that these beliefs were the "basis of all truth," and their advocates the true upholders of human liberty. Bakunin then accused Mazzini of two "unpardonable" crimes: disparaging the fallen Communards and condemning the International. By heaping calumnies and denunciations upon the heroic population of Paris, Mazzini had "turned his back on the cause of the proletariat, remembering only his mission as a prophet and priest." And by excommunicating the International, Mazzini had placed himself in opposition to "the only path to salvation for the proletariat of the entire world." Together, these "crimes" proved that Mazzini had made "a final break with the revolution and joined the ranks of international reaction."¹⁵

The work of a master polemicist, Bakunin's pamphlet, together with other treatises of this period, provided a trenchant critique that young republicans could easily understand and use against Mazzini. His propaganda helped neutralize Mazzini's campaign against the International and intensified the internal crisis of Italian republicanism. Yet, for all the effectiveness of Bakunin's campaign, it required Garibaldi's defense of the Paris Commune and the International to decisively undercut Mazzini and spur the rise of socialism.¹⁶

That Garibaldi and Mazzini should have embraced opposing views of the Paris Commune and the International was inevitable. The antagonism be-

¹⁴ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 149–150, 178; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 121, 124–125.

¹⁵ Published as a supplement to *Il Gazzettino Rosa* (Milan), August 16, 1871. See Bakunin: *Selected Writings*, 214–225; *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 1, 3–12.

¹⁶ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 323–325; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 178–179; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 124.

tween the two patriots, festering since the days of the Roman Republic of 1849, had erupted into a full-scale feud after the Mentana disaster, for which Garibaldi held Mazzini responsible. He resented Mazzini's authoritarianism, disparaged his methods, and mocked his political and social programs. Mazzini, in turn, had always resented Garibaldi's political ambitions, considering the general inadequate for the role of leader of the democratic movement. Nevertheless, personal rivalry was only partly responsible for Garibaldi's stance.¹⁷

Deeply humanitarian but ideologically unsophisticated, Garibaldi saw the Commune essentially as a struggle between the downtrodden of Paris and their reactionary oppressors. Oversimplified as well was his conception of the International as a humanitarian organization committed merely to the liberation of the poor and the oppressed. The implications of the class struggle and other socialist tenets espoused by the International were lost on Garibaldi, who naively assumed that the IWA's program was open to revision. Consequently, socialism and the International loomed brightly in his view as "the sun of the future," uniting under its banner everyone devoted to the emancipation of the downtrodden. For many radical republicans, equally ignorant of socialist doctrines and the IWA program, Garibaldi's endorsement signaled a new beginning, enforcing their determination to break with Mazzini and embrace the International as the legitimate heir to the Risorgimento's revolutionary traditions.¹⁸

THE ROME CONGRESS, NOVEMBER 1-6, 1871

Amidst mounting dissension, Mazzini called for a congress of workers' societies to convene in Rome on November 1, 1871, for the purpose of reviving the Pact of Brotherhood of 1864, the articles of faith of the Mazzinian workers' movement. From 1861 to 1864, when he sought to rally labor to his cause, Mazzini had urged workers to reject the paternal apoliticism of the bourgeois moderates who frequently headed their mutual aid societies, embrace the republic as their goal, and engage in political struggle. Subsequently preoccupied with the last phases of unification, Mazzini had ignored the labor movement, and many Mazzinian workers' societies were leaderless or disbanded by 1871. But Mazzini's real objective was not to strengthen the labor movement by regenerating political militancy among

¹⁷ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 297-298.

¹⁸ Ibid., 295-296, 317-318; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 158-161; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 109, 111-114. For more detailed treatment, see Franco Della Peruta, "La concezione del socialismo in Garibaldi," and Letterio Briguglio, "Garibaldi e l'Internazionale," in Gaetano Cingari, ed., *Garibaldi e il socialismo* (Rome and Bari, 1984), 81-118.

workers, but to calm middle-class fears of an uprising like the Commune and assure the bourgeoisie that Italian workers were free of socialist contamination.¹⁹

Perceiving his adversary's vulnerability on this issue, Bakunin composed a lengthy treatise denouncing Mazzini's true reasons for convening the workers' congress, which he sent to his friends in Naples for translation.²⁰ The Neapolitans were so enthused by the manuscript that within two days Alberto Tucci and Carlo Cafiero prepared a shorter version for distribution in Rome. Their leaflet charged that Mazzini's real purpose was to launch a coup d'état against "the new ideas and hopes that after the glorious and fertile insurrection of the Paris Commune have ostensibly begun to rouse the proletariat and youth of Italy." Mazzini hated these ideas and hopes, as well as the International that fostered them, because they threatened the establishment of his "theocratic, autocratic and centralist republic in Italy."²¹

Cafiero and Tucci created a stir when they disrupted Mazzini's meeting to distribute Bakunin's leaflet, but their efforts amounted to overkill. The Rome congress of November 1–6, 1871, failed to realize Mazzini's objectives: workers' societies were not forged into an anti-internationalist front; bourgeois support for his struggle against the International was not forthcoming; nor were conservative workers from the promonarchist mutual-aid societies converted to Mazzinianism. A revised Pact of Brotherhood was adopted and some of the Mazzinian workers' societies were revitalized (more than three hundred would still be active by 1874); however, the Mazzinians left the congress isolated and with diminished influence in the labor movement. Four months later, on March 10, 1872, Mazzini died, a tired and disillusioned old man.²²

GROWTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL

The growth of the International accelerated rapidly after the Rome congress. Naples was still the center of the movement, although repression had reduced the section's membership to less than three hundred by June 1871.

¹⁹ See Mazzini, "Ai rappresentanti gli artigiani nel Congresso di Roma," *La Roma del Popolo* (Rome), October 12, 1871, in *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 325–327. Also Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 357–362; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 188; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 130; Gastone Manacorda, *Il movimento operaio italiano attraverso i suoi congressi: Dalle origini alla formazione del Partito socialista (1853–1892)* (Rome, 1963), 96.

²⁰ For Bakunin's original treatise, "Ai miei amici d'Italia in occasione del congresso operaio convocato a Roma per il 1 novembre 1871 dal partito mazziniano," and the abbreviated version circulated at the Rome congress, "Agli operai delegati al congresso di Roma," see *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 5–49, 313–321.

²¹ *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 313–316.

²² Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 381–385; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 96–99.

The reorganization of the section, undertaken by a new group that included Carlo Gambuzzi, Carmelo Palladino, Enrico Malatesta, and Carlo Cafiero, was disrupted by the minister of the interior's decree of August 14, 1871, dissolving the section. Its leaders were indicted for political subversion, but a trial never ensued. Only Cafiero spent a few days in jail and paid a heavy fine.²³

Harassment had the effect of generating sympathy for the International. As Cafiero recounted to Friedrich Engels:

Ah! Yes, my dear friend, the government has done us much good with its persecution. My arrest was a real treasure. . . . it broke the ice, and for more than 15 days all the newspapers of Italy spoke of nothing else but the International, incendiarism, the crazy communists, the callow youths who disavow the beliefs of their parents, etc. . . . In sum, for better or worse, the International in Italy is a fact, publically and frankly affirmed; it has entered to become part of the normal life of the people.²⁴

Operating underground, Neapolitan internationalists reconstituted their section as the *Federazione Operaia Napoletana* in December 1871, with Malatesta as secretary. Starting February 7, 1892, the federation published its own propaganda organ, *La Campana*, under the editorship of Tucci and Cafiero. *La Campana* was the ideological heir to *Libertà e Giustizia* and a key organ of the nascent anarchist movement, but it survived for only two months because of financial difficulties and police harassment. Although the same reasons prevented local militants from sustaining another publication until 1877, Naples continued to remain a major center of internationalist activity.²⁵

In Sicily, where Saverio Friscia had paved the way for Bakuninism before the Paris Commune, the International began receiving support from young Mazzinians in the summer of 1871, thanks to Garibaldi's having neutralized Mazzini's antisocialist campaign. The most important IWA sections were in Sciacca, Friscia's hometown, and Girgenti, where his lawyer friend Antonio Riggio influenced local workers' societies and published Sicily's first socialist organ, *L'Eguaglianza*, from July 1871 to March 1872. Other Sicilian sections that espoused "Garibaldian-socialism," that is, bourgeois radicalism, were formed. By the spring of 1872, the international was winning recruits among the working class as well as the radical bourgeoisie, espe-

²³ Palladino, "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana," 70–73; Cafiero to Engels, September 10, 1871, in *Marx a Engels: Corrispondenza*, 41–43.

²⁴ Cafiero to Engels, November 27, 1871, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 91.

²⁵ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 227–228; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:104–115, 210–211; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 115–119, 143; Pier Fausto Buccellato and Marina Iaccio, *Gli anarchici nell'Italia meridionale: La stampa (1869–1893)* (Rome, 1982), 291–297.

cially in Palermo. Elsewhere in southern Italy, Internationalist enclaves appeared in Puglia and Calabria.²⁶

By 1872 the geographic axis of the Internationalist movement was shifting from Naples and Sicily to the northern and north-central regions of Italy. Working with the journalist Vincenzo Pezza and the student Vincenzo Testini, Bakunin developed a small following in Milan by November 1871. At the end of the year, Pezza, Theodore Cuno—a German engineer who was Engels's only contact in Lombardy—and about thirty socialist comrades broke away from the Mazzinian workers' society to form an IWA section, the *Circolo operaio di Milano*, with a Bakuninist program. The Milan section tripled its membership within three months and briefly published a newspaper, *Il Martello*, under Pezza's direction. Despite these auspicious beginnings, Bakunin never conducted a major campaign in Milan or other Lombard cities. This turned out to be a serious mistake in the long run. The same was true for Turin in Piedmont, where some 270 workers quit their Mazzinian federation in the summer of 1871 to form an IWA section, *L'Emancipazione del proletario*, organized according to trades. The Turin section was led by the journalist Carlo Terzaghi, a nefarious character later exposed as a police agent, who was expelled for misappropriation of funds in February 1872. By then, however, the clever intriguer had reduced the Turin section to chaos.²⁷

It was in north-central Italy that the International would acquire its largest and most militant following. In Florence, where the Mazzinians were still strong, the International took root at the beginning of 1872 without any assistance from Bakunin. Several middle-class intellectuals of the Social Democratic Union and the Freethinkers' Society met with leaders of local workers' societies to found a *fascio operaio* (workers' group). Chief among the intellectuals were Luigi Castellazzo, Luigi Stefanoni, and Antonio Martinati, radical republicans who espoused the Garibaldian variety of internationalism. Foremost among the workers were Gaetano Grassi (tailor), Francesco Natta (mechanic), and Oreste Lovari (shoemaker), true socialists who would become major figures in the internationalist movement. The *Fascio Operaio*, which may have been an IWA section or an unaffiliated support group, was dominated initially by the Garibaldian in-

²⁶ Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 147–197; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 84; Pier Carlo Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia: Problemi di una revisione storiografica," in *Il movimento operaio e socialista: Bilancio storiografico e problemi storici: Atti del convegno promosso da "Mondo operaio" per il 70° del Partito Socialista Italiano*, Firenze, 18–20 gennaio 1963 (Milan, 1965), 87.

²⁷ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 408; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 200–204, 222–225; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:115–118, 185–188, 211–213; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 127–128, 137, 143, 163.

ternationalists, as was another IWA section founded in March. Leadership of both, however, soon passed to socialist workers and middle-class intellectuals. Elsewhere in Tuscany, IWA sections had been organized in Pisa, Siena, Empoli, Livorno, and Pistoia by the spring of 1872.²⁸

The Romagna developed an even larger internationalist following in 1871–1872 than Tuscany. The Romagna had chafed under clerical misrule for centuries as part of the Papal Legations, so the Napoleonic imperium was a breath of fresh air by contrast. After the congress of Vienna, however, the Romagnoles found themselves sandwiched between Rome and Austria, suffering political oppression from the former and military incursions by the latter. The Romagnoles' hatred of despotism regularly fueled revolutionary conspiracies and violent uprisings, first under the Carbonari and later under the republicans. National unification only intensified their grievances. Under the House of Savoy the Romagna was treated much like Sicily—"the two Irelands of Italy"—as a conquered country that must be taught submission. Thus, with hatred for church and state endemic among both the petite bourgeoisie and the working class, the Romagna provided an optimum environment for anarchist socialism.²⁹

The Romagna in 1871 was still the stronghold of Garibaldinismo, and the first socialist groups in the region were Garibaldian internationalist. Unlike the dissident republicans elsewhere who embraced the IWA, the pro-internationalists of the Romagna wanted initially to establish a national political organization that would work for a popular revolution under Garibaldi and the creation of a democratic republic. Toward that end, Lodovico Nabruzzi, the twenty-five-year-old editor of the newspaper *Il Romagnolo*, convinced six republican associations of Ravenna to support the IWA in October 1871. The official IWA section of Ravenna was constituted under Nabruzzi's leadership on January 1, 1872. In Bologna, meanwhile, Erminio Pescatori and other Garibaldians had founded the first Fascio Operaio in Italy on November 27, 1871. According to Costa, the *fasci operai* (workers' groups) were "the primitive form that the International Association assumed in Italy—a transitional form between Mazzinianism and Garibaldianism on the one hand and revolutionary socialism on the other."³⁰ Although composed of students and middle-class elements as well as workers, the fasci operai played a key role in the spread of socialism among the working class. By the end of 1871, the Bologna Fascio Operaio had acquired five hundred members, published its own newspaper, and begun

²⁸ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 124–126, 136–141; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 264–267; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:213–215; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 164–165; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 84.

²⁹ Francesco Saverio Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est* (Paris, 1890), 216–346.

³⁰ Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 14.

extending its influence to other cities; by March 1872, it claimed ten sections in the Romagna and three in the adjacent Marches.³¹

All told, there were between fifty and one hundred IWA sections in Italy by the summer of 1872, two-fifths of them in the Romagna, Emilia, and the adjacent Marches. Fully two-thirds of their adherents had come from the ranks of Mazzinianism. Italian democracy also provided the rising socialist movement with a press, as more and more republican newspapers shifted loyalties from Mazzini to the International. These newspapers greatly facilitated the dissemination of the IWA's message and the recruitment of new support.³²

REVOLT AGAINST MARX-ENGELS AND THE ASCENDANCY OF BAKUNINISM

Just as socialism began establishing roots in Italy, the confrontation between Bakunin and Marx for control of the International entered its final phase. Marx had decided to crush the anarchist heresy after Bakunin challenged his position at the Basil congress of September 1869. Toward that end, the IWA's General Council convened a special conference in London from September 17 to 23, 1871, extending the powers of the General Council at the expense of the national federations and the local sections. Resolution Nine, on political action and the working class, was aimed directly against Bakunin's doctrine of political abstentionism. Whereas the IWA had formerly deemed political action a subordinate instrument for economic emancipation, Resolution Nine proclaimed that the economic movement and political action of the working class were "indissolubly united," and that "the formation of the proletariat into a political party is indispensable to assure the triumph of the social revolution and its supreme objective: the abolition of all classes."³³

The London conference was a Pyrrhic victory. By assuming authoritarian powers and imposing centralism and orthodoxy upon the International, Marx and Engels precipitated a rebellion among the majority of IWA sec-

³¹ Ibid.; Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 404–405; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 136.

³² For example, *Il Gazzettino Rosa* (Milan), *Il Ciceruacchio* (Rome), *Il Romagnolo* (Ravenna), *L'Apostolato* (Catania), *La Favilla* (Mantova), and *La Plebe* (Lodi). See Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 432; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 84; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:209–216; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 257; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 161, 287. Modern scholarship favors the lower number of IWA sections.

³³ Miklós Molnár, *Le déclin de la Première Internationale: La conférence de Londres de 1871* (Geneva, 1963), 83–84. Also Jacques Freymond and Miklós Molnár, "The Rise and Fall of the International," in *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864–1943*, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, 1966), 27–28; G. M. Stekloff, *History of the First International* (London, 1928), 204–210.

tions against the General Council that doomed the unity of the International.³⁴ The first to revolt were the Swiss of the Jura. Led by the schoolmaster James Guillaume and the watchmaker Adhémar Schwitzguébel, the Swiss Bakuninists met at Sonvillier on November 12 to reject the resolutions of the General Council and reconstitute themselves as the Jurassienne Federation. In a circular to all IWA affiliates, they declared that while it was

quite natural that this school [the Marxists], whose ideal is *the political conquest of power by the working class*, should have believed that the International was going to alter its original structure and transform itself into a hierarchical organization directed and governed by the General Council, . . . we feel obliged to fight them in the name of that Social Revolution whose program is: "Emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves."³⁵

Demanding that the role of General Council be restricted to correspondence and statistics, the Sonvillier circular concluded with a strong affirmation of libertarian principles: "The International, embryo of the future society, must from now on faithfully reflect our principles of federation and liberty, and must reject any principle tending toward authority and dictatorship."³⁶

Reverberations from the Sonvillier congress were felt in every internationalist circle in Italy. The vast majority of Italian socialists, hitherto ignorant of the Marx-Bakunin dispute, became suddenly aware that major ideological differences separated Marx and Bakunin, especially regarding worker participation in politics. This new awareness was crucial. Whether the emerging IWA sections chose the "authoritarianism" of the General Council or the "antiauthoritarianism" of the Sonvillier circular would determine the course of Italian socialism for the next decade.³⁷

The growing backlash against Resolution Nine played into Bakunin's plans to undermine Marx in Italy, and he began shifting his attack from Mazzini to the General Council. Bakunin enjoyed significant advantages over the opposition. His disciples were leading figures in their respective circles: Gambuzzi and Palladino in Naples, Friscia in Sicily, Pezza in Milan, and Giuseppe Mazzoni in Florence. Bakunin also had the services of a roving ambassador, Fanelli, who after several years of inactivity had resumed his place at the Russian's side. Marx and Engels, on the other hand,

³⁴ Freymond and Molnár, "The Rise and Fall of the First International," 27–28. The sections that eventually took a stand against the General Council were the Spanish, Italian, Belgian, French Swiss, French emigrés in Switzerland, and most of the Americans.

³⁵ Quoted in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 2:240.

³⁶ Ibid. Also *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 403–406.

³⁷ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 214; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 140.

had only one Italian supporter of real influence, Carlo Cafiero, whose allegiance was now wavering. Another advantage was Bakunin's reputation as a "revolutionary phenomenon."³⁸ Perceived as the veteran leader of many European uprisings, Bakunin was a Russian "Siegfried" to the Italians, a heroic rebel whose philosophy of "revolution now" had enormous appeal for post-Risorgimento radicals. More recently, Bakunin's prestige had been greatly enhanced by his defense of the Paris Commune and the fight against Mazzini. Marx and Engels, in contrast, had failed to exploit Mazzini's unpopular stance, losing a unique opportunity to disseminate their ideas. Compared to Bakunin, Marx was relatively unknown to the Italians.³⁹

Marx might still have established a significant following in Italy at this time if Engels—the General Council's corresponding secretary for Italy—had not bungled the task. Engels had few contacts in Italy, notably his envoy Vitale Regis (Etienne Pechard), Cuno in Milan, the spy Terzaghi in Turin, and Cafiero in Naples, whose defection was imminent. Nevertheless, Engels never undertook meaningful efforts to develop new supporters, ignoring key figures, such as Palladino in Naples and Nabruzzi in Ravenna, after initial contact. During the critical period between the Sonvillier circular in November 1871 and the Bologna Fascio Operaio's congress in March 1872, Engels replied infrequently to his contacts despite their discouraging reports.⁴⁰

Engels made matters worse, moreover, by complaining to *La Roma del Popolo* about Mazzini's articles identifying Bakunin's key doctrines with the official program of the IWA, and by condemning Bakunin's attempts to substitute his "narrow and sectarian program" for the "broad program" of the International. Engels failed, however, to explain why he considered Bakuninism such a dangerous heresy, leaving the Italians suspicious as to his motives. Most important, Engels neglected to explain the doctrines of Marxism or to dispel the authoritarian image the General Council had acquired in the eyes of Italians because of the London conference and Resolution Nine. This negative impression continued to retard the development of Marxism in Italy for years to come.⁴¹

³⁸ Pezza's postscript to Bakunin's letter to Nabruzzi, January 3, 1872, in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 297.

³⁹ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 314–315; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 255; Michels, *Storia critica*, 43–44.

⁴⁰ *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 58–171 passim.

⁴¹ Engels to *La Roma del Popolo*, December 6, 1871, *ibid.*, 113–114; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 215–216; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:204; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 140–141; Gianni Bosio, "La fama di Marx in Italia (1871–1883)," *Movimento Operaio* 3, nos. 15–16 (March-May 1951): 519.

BAKUNIN'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE ROMAGNA

Bakunin reacted skillfully to the opportunities created by the Sonvillier congress. He flooded Italy with Sonvillier circulars late in November, and wrote at least seventeen letters to old friends and new contacts between December 10 and 20, requesting their support for the Sonvillier resolutions, which he described as "a solemn protest in the name of liberty, the true principle of the International, against the dogmatic and governmental pretensions of the General Council."⁴² Meanwhile, he assessed his strength, determining that he should focus his propaganda on the Romagna, where the International had the most support.

Bakunin conducted his campaign from the late autumn of 1871 to the beginning of 1872, contacting the three leading figures of the Bologna Fascio Operaio: Celso Ceretti, Erminio Pescatori, and Lodovico Nabruzzi, each of whom would serve as a conduit to other militants in the Romagna. One of Bakunin's letters to Ceretti and Pescatori in December 1871 was a declaration of war against Marx and the General Council. He explained that they must fight Marx as hard as they had fought Mazzini, because both were authoritarians driven by the same passion—"political vanity, religious in the one, and scientific and doctrinaire in the other." Mazzini and Marx acted the same way because "the evil is hidden in the lust for power, the love of command, and the thirst for authority. And Marx is profoundly infected by this evil." Marx's political system was almost the same as Mazzini's, for both "dream of world power, a world State." Mazzini strove to re-create Italy according to his own ideas so that she could regenerate the world and reign as its queen; Marx—a "pan-Germanist down to the marrow of his bones"—wanted Germany and the German race to regenerate the world according to his own methods.⁴³

Converting the Romagna, however, necessitated not only blocking inroads by the General Council but undermining Garibaldi. Bakunin exploited Garibaldi's vulnerabilities by underscoring issues that were sensitive to the Romagnoles. To Nabruzzi, who rejected Garibaldi's belief in the need for temporary dictatorship, Bakunin wrote in January 1872 that Garibaldi's "idée fixe is dictatorship, and nothing is more opposed to the social revolution than dictatorship." He further warned that Garibaldi understood nothing about the International's philosophy, so "if you have the misfortune to follow the political and socialist direction of Garibaldi, you will lose yourself in a labyrinth of impossible contradictions, because his politics is a

⁴² Bakunin to Celso Ceretti, December 15, 1871, in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 288.

⁴³ Bakunin to Ceretti and Pescatori, December 2–8, 1871, in *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 201–204.

continuous contradiction, and his socialism, as a system of thought, not as an instinct, is as worthless as that of Mazzini."⁴⁴ Bakunin's epistolary propaganda continued thereafter to reinforce and refine the socialist ideology of key Romagnoles like Nabruzzi and Ceretti.⁴⁵

As with Marx and Engels, Bakunin's campaign against Garibaldi was facilitated by his rival's own shortcomings and mistakes. Although still Italy's most popular revolutionary, especially among the Romagnoles, Garibaldi had become old and dispirited; he lacked the decisiveness and savvy needed to outmaneuver a wily opponent like Bakunin and unite Italian radicals and internationalists under his own brand of internationalist socialism. Moreover, as he came under pressure from the republicans, Garibaldi alienated many of the socialist internationalists among his followers by clarifying his "socialism" in such a way as to reveal that he was no socialist at all. And once Garibaldi abandoned his campaign to create a democratic coalition, becoming preoccupied with his feud with the Mazzinians, his influence among Romagnole internationalists waned and he ceased to represent a threat to Bakunin's ambitions.⁴⁶

Bakunin's ascendancy over Garibaldi as the leader of Italian internationalism became apparent at the regional congress of the Bologna Fascio Operaio on March 17–19, 1872. Whereas the Fascio's inaugural program of November 1871 had reflected Garibaldi's generic brand of humanitarian socialism, the Bologna congress evidenced the marked shift the Romagnoles had made toward Bakuninism in just four months. Reconciliation with the republicans was deemed incompatible with socialist principles. Internationalist participation in a republican insurrection—a hope some Mazzinians entertained—would be acceptable only if its goal was the emancipation of the proletariat. The congress also recognized both the London General Council and the Bern committee of the Jurassienne Federation as offices of correspondence and statistics, thereby transforming the latter into the equal and rival of the former—something the Jura Swiss had never intended.⁴⁷ The Romagnoles further evidenced their conversion by adopting a resolution expressing Bakuninist concepts of antistatism and political abstentionism. With its new antiauthoritarian orientation and growing

⁴⁴ Bakunin to Nabruzzi, January 3, 1872, in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 298–299.

⁴⁵ See especially his letter to Ceretti, March 13–27, 1872, in *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 235–255.

⁴⁶ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 236–242; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 147, 150–152, 155–157; Manuel G. Gonzales, *Andrea Costa and the Rise of Socialism in the Romagna* (Washington, D.C., 1980), 23.

⁴⁷ Both Bakunin and the Jura Swiss were quick to point out the error lest the Marxists use it against them, which, of course, they did, charging that the Fascio Operaio was the secret center of Bakunin's International Alliance of Socialist Democracy. See *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 255, 473n. 287.

prestige as the country's largest socialist organization (fourteen sections), the Bologna Fascio Operaio became the spearhead of Bakuninism in Italy.⁴⁸

CAFIERO'S CONVERSION

While the rank and file multiplied, the leadership of Italian internationalism made a vital acquisition when Carlo Cafiero embraced the Bakuninist cause. If Marx and Engels had wanted blind acceptance of their views and orders, they certainly chose the wrong man to become the General Council's principal agent in Italy. The pattern established from the outset was that of Engels indulging in sweeping and uninformed condemnation of everything Bakuninist, and Cafiero struggling in vain to convince him that his preconceived notions did not correspond to Italian realities. In his first letter of July 1, 1871, Engels attacked Bakunin's doctrines with unbridled contempt, detailed the Alliance's alleged machinations against the International, and recommended that Cafiero organize IWA sections among Italians who, unlike the Neapolitans, had not absorbed the "special fanaticism" of the Bakuninist sect.⁴⁹ In response, Cafiero assured Engels that while Bakunin had supporters in Naples, he did not command a sect that opposed the principles of the General Council. For Palladino and the other young militants who were working to reconstitute the IWA sections in Naples—the very men whom Engels considered suspect—Cafiero had nothing but praise. He also suggested that relations between the General Council and the Neapolitans might improve if Engels stopped ignoring their letters. Nor did Cafiero hesitate to credit Bakunin for the accomplishments Engels praised and mistakenly attributed to Cafiero, such as the anti-Mazzini circular distributed at the Rome congress.⁵⁰

Although perplexed by Engels's attacks against Bakunin and frustrated by his apparent indifference toward Italy, Cafiero did his best to serve the General Council in good faith. His conversion from Marxism to Bakuninism came gradually, attributable mainly to the political line adopted by the General Council at the London conference and to the influence of Bakuninist comrades, especially Palladino.⁵¹ Cafiero informed Engels in November 1871 that while he himself was not enthusiastic about Resolution Nine,

⁴⁸ Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 423–425; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 346–348; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:244–247; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 225–227, 242–246; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 138–139, 144–145, 155–157; Gonzales, *Costa*, 25–27.

⁴⁹ Engels to Cafiero, July 1, 1871, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 20–23.

⁵⁰ Cafiero to Engels, July 12, November 29, 1871, *ibid.*, 24–28, 93–100. The exchanges between Engels and Cafiero are insightfully analyzed by Pier Carlo Masini in "Engels e Cafiero (1871–1872)," *Tempo Presente* 10, no. 4 (April 1965): 6–25.

⁵¹ Pier Carlo Masini, *Cafiero* (Milan, 1974), 47, 63–64.

other Italian internationalists considered the idea of a proletarian political party to be a sellout of the working class to the bourgeoisie.⁵² Falsely assured by Engels that the London conference had not required the formation of a workers' party, Cafiero wrote a defense of Resolution Nine that actually evidenced support for Bakunin's theory of political abstentionism.⁵³ Whatever his confusion about the real purpose of Resolution Nine, Cafiero understood much better than Engels that the damage it had caused to the General Council's position in Italy was extensive, and that "all of our comments will never succeed in completely correcting the [authoritarian] spirit that originally informed it."⁵⁴

Cafiero was further dismayed by Engels's attack against Bakunin published in *La Roma del Popolo*. Until the publication of this letter—an "eminently impolitical act"—Cafiero had been able to limit the damage done by Resolution Nine and restrain internationalists like Palladino from breaking with the London General Council. But now, he chided Engels, "with that document you have really broken the eggs in my hand, as we say in Italy."⁵⁵ That Cafiero's own thinking had been influenced by these developments became evident during the General Council-Sonvillier circular controversy. Instead of defending the General Council, Cafiero assumed a neutral position, hoping to serve as mediator between the rival forces. His short-lived neutrality represented a decisive step toward Bakuninism. Although he continued to publish notices from the General Council in *La Campana*, Cafiero ceased to correspond with Engels until breaking with him officially in June 1872. A month earlier, Cafiero had become apprehensive about the next general congress and disturbed by the imminent split in the International. "I decided," he subsequently explained to Engels, "to study the question attentively, in order to form an exact judgment in this regard."⁵⁶ This required traveling around Italy and visiting Bakunin to measure the man for himself. Cafiero accompanied Fanelli to Locarno on May 20, 1872. The next day Bakunin noted in his diary: "The whole day with Fanelli and Cafiero—alliance perfectly accomplished."⁵⁷ Cafiero remained with Bakunin for almost a month; by June his conversion to anarchism was complete.⁵⁸

Engels's chagrin can only be imagined when Cafiero announced his defection to the enemy camp: "After a few minutes of conversation [with Ba-

⁵² Cafiero to Engels, November 17, 1871, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 75–76.

⁵³ *Il Gazzettino Rosa* (Milan), December 1871, in *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 411–413. On Engels's deception vis-à-vis Resolution Nine, see Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 278.

⁵⁴ Cafiero to Engels, December 19, 1871, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁶ Cafiero to Engels, June 12, 1872, *ibid.*, 221.

⁵⁷ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 328.

⁵⁸ Masini, *Cafiero*, 60–67.

kunin] we both realized we were in complete accord on principles. Yet they were the same principles I had been propagating for a year in Italy, without knowing that they were different from yours.”⁵⁹ He explained that his recent study of the *Communist Manifesto* had enabled him to understand how the Marxist program calling for the conquest of political power by the proletariat—contrary to what Engels had led him to believe—would result inevitably in the creation of a strong new state. Cafiero rejected this prospect categorically, adding, “Your *communist program* is, for me, at its most positive, a gross reactionary absurdity. I have the same horror of the State as of the Church, as institutions founded for privilege, created by those who wanted to secure for themselves the exclusive enjoyment of *capital*.”⁶⁰ In a postscript to his last letter, Cafiero fired a parting salvo at Engels that reflected how implacable an adversary he had become:

Consumatum est!, your work is finished! . . . It is not I who say it, but the Belgian Congress with the proposal of reform of our statutes; and the mountains of the Jura repeat it: *Consumatum est!* And Italy? Italy will welcome with joy the death of the General Council, which . . . has given . . . all the proofs of a *strong government*, replying, to whoever attacked its principles, with insinuation, slander, and the whole series of personal intrigues, which form the quintessence of the strong policy of a model State.

Italy will repeat sneering: *Consumatum est!*⁶¹

Considered one of the most important documents of the early internationalist period, Cafiero’s letter represented the first libertarian refutation of the Marxist political program written in Italy, and Italian anarchism’s first act of ideological definition.⁶² Cafiero retained an abiding respect for Marx as a thinker, but his break with the General Council was complete and permanent. Now he would fight for the anarchist cause with a mystical devotion and fanatical extremism unmatched by any Italian revolutionary of his generation.

ENGELS IN DEFEAT

Engels’s campaign for Italian support had sputtered to a halt by March 1872. That month his faithful operative Vitale Regis informed him that “in

⁵⁹ Cafiero to Engels, June 12, 1872, in *Marx & Engels: Corrispondenza*, 221.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁶¹ Cafiero to Engels, June 12–19, 1872, *ibid.*, 225. In addition to spurning the Marxian political program, Cafiero’s letter sharply criticized Engels’s propaganda tactics and rejected as false the myriad accusations that Marx and Engels were leveling against Bakunin during these months. His violent postscript was prompted by Marx’s most recent pamphlet, *Les prétendues scissions dans l’Internationale*, attacking the “Bakuninist heresy.”

⁶² Masini, *Cafiero*, 66–67.

Italy the terrain has been won completely by the dissidents.”⁶³ The weight of evidence, however, did not deter Engels from indulging in optimistic fantasy. Although nearly all the Italian sections of the IWA supported the Sonvillier circular, he assured the General Council on March 6 that the “authentic workers” in Italy were completely in favor of the principles of the International, as explained in the deliberations of the London conference, and that “the Doctrine preached by the representatives of the middle class that the working class must abstain from politics, has had no success.”⁶⁴ Engels repeated this misrepresentation a week later, when he complained that “the great difficulty for the Council has been to enter into direct relations with the Italian workers” because the correspondence as well as the newspapers were in the hands of men of the middle class.⁶⁵

From the outset, Engels had consistently underestimated Bakunin as a political adversary and refused to believe that Italian workers might embrace anarchist doctrines. In January 1872, writing to Theodor Cuno, Engels dismissed the notion that the IWA sections organized by the Bakuninists had attracted any workers, arguing that “it is clear that they [the Bakuninists] do not have many people behind them, because in the end the great mass of Italian workers is still Mazzinian and will remain so for as long as the International is identified with political abstentionism.”⁶⁶ While Mazzinian workers’ associations still outnumbered by far those of socialist persuasion, even a casual perusal of the internationalist and dissident democratic press would have revealed to Engels that Bakuninism was rapidly developing a following among Italian artisans and workers. But this reality flew in the face of his unshakable belief that Italian internationalists were all a “gang of déclassés, the refuse of the bourgeoisie.”⁶⁷ It was therefore neither his own ineptitude nor the unpopularity of the Marxist program, but rather Bakunist obstructionism, that was responsible for the General Council’s failure to attract a working-class following:

In Italy the damned difficulty is only that of succeeding in putting ourselves into direct contact with the workers. These damned Bakunist doctrinaires, lawyers, doctors, etc., have interposed themselves everywhere and they comport themselves as if they were the born representatives of the workers.⁶⁸

Cafiero’s final letter to Engels rejected his charge that Bakunist machinations had prevented the Council from reaching the Italian proletariat. In fact, Engels had never asked Cafiero to help him establish contact with

⁶³ Regis to Engels, March 5, 1872, in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, 314.

⁶⁴ Report quoted in *ibid.*, 308.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Engels to Cuno, January 24, 1871, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 141.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of Engels’s depiction of Italian internationalists as a “gang of déclassés.”

⁶⁸ Engels to Cuno, May 7, 1872, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 203.

workers or heeded his advice to communicate directly with the different regions of Italy.⁶⁹ But nothing Cafiero, Cuno, or anyone else said or did could deter Engels from engaging in self-exculpatory rationalization. Thus in July 1872—his arrogance and contempt registering maximum—Engels ascribed Marxism's failure to establish itself to Italy's lack of a modern industrial proletariat:

The Italians must still attend the school of experience a little more to learn that a backward nation of peasants such as they only make themselves ridiculous when they want to prescribe to the workers of the nations with big industry how they must conduct themselves in order to arrive at emancipation.⁷⁰

The notion that Italy's socioeconomic backwardness and the political immaturity of its working class accounted for the triumph of Bakuninist anarchism over Marxian socialism later became a fundamental axiom of Italian Marxist historiography.⁷¹ This facile interpretation glosses over all the evidence indicating that the Bakuninist victory had little to do with the stage of Italy's industrial development. For young Italian radicals, eager to continue the revolutionary tradition of the Risorgimento and drawn to socialism and the International in the wake of the Paris Commune, Bakunin possessed the kind of mythic and charismatic appeal that Marx could not match. Bakunin was thus able to develop a small but devoted coterie of veteran revolutionaries, which actively furthered his cause. Marx and the General Council had no significant following in Italy, and in the crucial year following the Paris Commune, Engels did nothing to establish one, his sole aim being to destroy Bakunin. Furthermore, it was Bakunin, not Marx and Engels, who championed the Commune and the International in the face of Mazzini's attacks. And when Mazzini lost control over Italian revolutionary youth and Garibaldi proved incapable of establishing himself as the head of Italian internationalism, Bakunin stepped into the breach to offer dynamic leadership, inspiration, and fresh ideas that challenged traditional republican notions about class, the national, and the state. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the London conference, Bakunin exploited Engels's failure to counteract the negative repercussions of General Council policy. Obligated to choose between socialisms they defined primarily in terms of authoritarianism and antiauthoritarianism, Italian internationalists found Bakunin's antiauthoritarian, federalist philosophy genuinely compatible with their love of liberty, innate individualism, regionalism, and determination to prevent the introduction of statist centralism into the workers' movement.⁷²

⁶⁹ Cafiero to Engels, June 12, 1872, *ibid.*, 223.

⁷⁰ Engels to Cuno, July 10, 1872, as quoted in Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 431.

⁷¹ See, for example, A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:245, 253, 299, 303; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 144–146.

⁷² Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 272–273, 289–290; Michels, *Storia critica*, 43–44.

PART TWO

The Italian International

THE ITALIAN FEDERATION OF THE IWA, 1872–1874

THE RIMINI CONFERENCE

At their meeting in June, Bakunin and Cafiero had decided to organize Italian IWA sections into a national federation in order to strengthen themselves against Marx at the next general congress. Cafiero took charge of the campaign, coordinating efforts in Milan, Bologna, Florence, Rome, and Naples. On June 23, the Bologna Fascio Operaio issued a circular convening a national conference in Rimini, which had a strong IWA section of its own and was easily accessible to delegates from the rest of the Romagna, Emilia, Tuscany, the Marches, and Umbria. The date was fixed for August 4–6, 1872.¹

While preparations were underway, the Bakuninists learned that the International's general congress was to be held at the Hague on September 2, 1872. The General Council had selected the Netherlands rather than Switzerland for the congress site in order to minimize attendance by Bakunin's Italian, Spanish, and Swiss supporters and thereby assure victory for Marx. To counter the Marxists' strategy, Bakunin and his Swiss lieutenant James Guillaume first considered boycotting the congress and establishing a rival International, but in August they decided that all Bakuninists should attend the congress and demand the abolition of the General Council. The Italians, however, were already considering another alternative.²

On the afternoon of August 4, 1872, twenty-five delegates, representing twenty-one sections, gathered at the headquarters of the Rimini Fascio Operaio. Dozens of other sections, unable to send representatives, gave their official support. Nearly all of the major figures of the Italian internationalist movement were present: Carlo Cafiero (Naples), Celso Ceretti

¹ For the Rimini congress, see Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 350–367; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:290–298; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 111–114; Masini, “La preparazione della conferenza di Rimini,” in Faenza, *Anarchismo e socialismo in Italia*, 3–13; and the official documents in Pier Carlo Masini, ed., *La Federazione Italiana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori: Atti ufficiali, 1871–1880*, (Milan, 1964), 27–46 (hereafter referred to as *FI: Atti*).

² Bakunin to Gambuzzi, July 15, 1872, in Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 354; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, II:316, 319n. 1.

(Mirandola), Andrea Costa (Imola), Giuseppe Fanelli (Naples), Saverio Friscia (Sciacca), Gaetano Grassi (Florence), Lodovico Nabruzzi (Ravenna), Lorenzo Piccioli-Poggiali (Florence), Paride Suzzara-Verdi (Mantua), and Tito Zanardelli (Naples). The principal absentees were Errico Malatesta³ and Vincenzo Pezza, the latter near death from consumption. The spy Carlo Terzaghi, despite his expulsion from the Turin section, had obtained an invitation as an independent observer, thereby assuring that the authorities would be apprised of everything. The preeminence of southerners and Romagnoles in the movement was apparent from the composition of the presiding officers: Cafiero, president; Nabruzzi, vice-president; Costa, secretary; and Zanardelli, vice-secretary. Save for Terzaghi and two Garibaldian socialists, Ceretti and Suzzara-Verdi, all the delegates were Bakuninists. Italy's small contingent of evolutionary socialists, led by Enrico Bignami in Lodi and Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani in Rome, did not participate.⁴

The creation of the Italian Federation of the International Workingmen's Association established the anarchist movement on a national basis and placed Italy solidly behind Bakunin.⁵ Its program retained the original preamble to the IWA statutes, which stated that "the emancipation of the workers must be the work of the workers themselves" and that "the economic emancipation of the worker is . . . the great end to which every political movement must be subordinated as a means."⁶ Its regulations, proposed by the Neapolitan delegation, reflected the antiauthoritarian orientation now firmly established among the Italian internationalists. Accordingly, the Federation comprised only two national bodies—a correspondence commission (headed by Costa) and a statistical commission (Ceretti, Malatesta, Terzaghi)—lest the local autonomy and free initiative

³ "I was not at Rimini," wrote Malatesta to Max Nettlau on November 14, 1928, without further elaboration. See Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (Amsterdam), Max Nettlau Archive, subfolder 1928. Only Malatesta's close comrade and biographer Luigi Fabbri notes his absence from the Rimini congress. See his *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta* (Barcelona, 1938), 62. Other historians include Malatesta among the delegates.

⁴ Of the sections represented, eleven were from the Emilia-Romagna (Bologna, Mirandola, Ravenna, Rimini, Imola, Lugo, San Potito, Fusignano, San Giovanni in Persiceto, Forlì, Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna), three from the Marches (Fano, Fermo, Senigallia), two from Tuscany (Florence, Siena), two from the Mezzogiorno (Naples, Sciacca in Sicily), and one each from Umbria (the province), Lombardy (Mantua), and Lazio (Rome). The important Milan section could not send a delegate but sent a message urging the conference to abolish or at least limit the powers of the General Council. See Masini, *FI: Atti*, 30; Cerrito, "L'ideologia di Bakunin," 74; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 365–366; A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:295–296; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 176–177.

⁵ Masini, "La preparazione della conferenza di Rimini," 3; Gino Cerrito, "Le origini del socialismo in Italia: Il primo decennio di attività del movimento anarchico italiano," *Volontà* 25, no. 5 (September-October 1972): 338.

⁶ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 38.

of sections and individuals be compromised. Membership was open to all workers' societies that accepted the Federation's program. Congresses were to be held annually and each affiliate society had the right to send a delegate.⁷

Regarding the struggle against Marx, the Italian Federation defied Bakunin's latest wishes—he had warned that secession at this juncture would constitute a “grave error” that might have “deplorable consequences”⁸—and severed relations with the General Council. The Rimini delegates charged that the General Council, by means of Resolution Nine and other unworthy methods, had attempted to impose the authoritarian program of the German communist party upon the entire International. The doctrine of authoritarian communism, they affirmed, “is the negation of the revolutionary sentiment of the Italian proletariat.” The Rimini delegates proposed, therefore, that antiauthoritarian socialists convene a rival congress in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.⁹

The final issue discussed at Rimini was workers' strikes. Italian Bakuninists believed that strikes were of little use as a means to improve the workers' economic condition, but were important in developing the spirit of class solidarity necessary to fight against capitalism. The delegates ended the conference with the cry, “Viva la Rivoluzione Sociale!” On behalf of the newly constituted federation, Cafiero and Costa sent letters to Garibaldi and Bakunin, saluting the former as a “comrade and brother in the battle for the emancipation of man,” the latter as the “indefatigable champion of social revolution . . . against whom a great wrong was done within the International.”¹⁰

FROM THE HAGUE TO SAINT-IMIER

The Italians' decision to break unilaterally with the General Council has prompted considerable debate among historians. Marxists, who perceive the *longa manus* of Bakunin working everywhere, have charged that, despite his stated disapproval, the Russian anarchist was ultimately responsible for the secession of the Italians, having subtly manipulated them in order to split the International.¹¹ Non-Marxists and a few anarchists have argued that by breaking with the General Council, the Italians deprived the Bakuninists of a solid voting bloc at the Hague congress and gave credence to

⁷ Ibid., 30–31, 39–41; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 366.

⁸ Bakunin to Celso Ceretti, August 25, 1872, in *Archives Bakounine*, ed. Arthur Lehning et al. (Leiden, 1965), vol. 2, *Michel Bakounine et les conflits dans l'Internationale*, 1872, 134.

⁹ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 36–37, and his “La preparazione della conferenza di Rimini,” 9–10.

¹⁰ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 34–35, 42.

¹¹ Gian Mario Bravo, “Marx ed Engels e la conferenza di Rimini,” in Faenza, *Anarchismo e socialismo in Italia*, 81–97.

Marx's charge that Bakunin was seeking to disrupt, rather than reform, the International.¹² Most anarchists and their sympathizers, however, have maintained that Bakunin was not responsible for the Rimini resolutions, the break with the General Council having been pushed by the headstrong Cafiero.¹³

This debate overlooks the fact that Italian participation in the Hague congress was doubtful regardless of the Rimini decision. Engels declared a few weeks later that none of the Italian sections except the Neapolitan federation had fulfilled the conditions prescribed by the general rules and regulations for the admission of new sections—"therefore an ital[ian] fed[eration] of the I.W.A. does not exist."¹⁴ Given the Italians' complete disregard for bureaucratic detail, Engels was probably correct. The General Council, therefore, could have barred the Italian Federation from participating, if only on technical grounds. But even if an Italian delegation had been recognized, the outcome would undoubtedly have been the same.

Marx and Engels did not convene the Hague congress of September 2–7, 1872, to prevent a schism but to bury the Bakunist heresy. The Marxists and their Blanquist allies, who enjoyed a forty to twenty-five advantage in delegate strength, passed resolutions supporting Marx on every issue, strengthening the power of the General Council and incorporating Resolution Nine into the statutes of the International. Bakunin and his Swiss lieutenants Guillaume and Schwitzguébel, convicted of charges compiled by Engels, Marx, and his son-in-law Paul Lafargue, were expelled from the International. Marx then transferred the General Council from London to New York to prevent the Blanquists from gaining control, in effect killing the International to save it from his rivals.¹⁵

With the Marxist International consigned to oblivion, Bakunin deemed the moment propitious to embrace the idea the Italians had advanced at Rimini and convene an antiauthoritarian congress. After preliminary discussions in Zurich, Bakunin and fourteen of his associates met in Saint-Imier, Switzerland, on September 15–16, 1872, to reconstitute the International along antiauthoritarian lines. The delegates included most of the important figures of the international anarchist movement: Cafiero, Costa, Malatesta, Fanelli, and Nabruzzi from Italy; Guillaume and Schwitzguébel from Switzerland; Rafael Farga Pellicer, Tomás Gonzáles Morago, Charles Alerini, and Nicolás Marselau from Spain; and the French Communard

¹² Carr, *Bakunin*, 446; Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 180.

¹³ Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 364. Nabruzzi confirmed this for Nettlau in 1899. For Cafiero's role, see Masini, "La preparazione della conferenza di Rimini," 10–12.

¹⁴ Engels to the Italian sections, August 23, 1872, in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 242–243.

¹⁵ Carr, *Bakunin*, 446–451; Stekloff, *First International*, 252–254.

refugees Jean-Louis Pindy, Camille Camet, and Gustave Lefrancais, the latter representing two IWA sections in the United States.¹⁶

The Saint-Imier delegates hoped to attract a broad range of anti-Marxists to the new International. Decisions on organization, while anarchist in spirit, were therefore rendered in terms acceptable to all antiauthoritarians. The resolutions of the Hague congress were repudiated and the authority of the General Council rejected. In place of the Council, the delegates adopted the "Pact of Friendship, Solidarity, and Mutual Defense," to which the Spanish, Italian, Jurassian, and American federations subscribed. Other federations wishing to adhere to the pact would deal directly with each other without "governmental" control.¹⁷

Decidedly Bakuninist, however, was Saint-Imier's rejection of the Marxian emphasis on political action of the proletariat. "The wish to force the proletariat to adopt a uniform line of conduct or a political program, as the only path that can lead to its social emancipation," the Bakuninists declared, "is an absurd as well as reactionary claim." Each federation and section was free to follow its own line in political matters. However, in order for the proletariat to establish free economic organization and federation, based upon the work and equality of all, it must have "absolute independence from all political government," whether bourgeois or working-class. Advancing a fundamental tenet of anarchist philosophy, the delegates asserted that all political organizations ruled in the interests of a single class and to the detriment of the masses. "The proletariat, if it wants to seize political power, will itself become a ruling and exploiting class." Therefore, "the destruction of all political power," even that which calls itself provisional and revolutionary, was "the first duty of the proletariat."¹⁸ Rather than support political action, the anarchists at Saint-Imier declared themselves in favor of labor organization and economic resistance. Although they had failed to improve economic conditions in the past, labor organizations helped stimulate worker solidarity and class consciousness. So, too, the strike. Foreshadowing the anarcho-syndicalists of a later era, the Saint-Imier delegates doubted that strikes could achieve lasting economic results but endorsed them nevertheless as a means of revolutionary preparation for "the great and final revolutionary struggle."¹⁹

The Saint-Imier congress laid the theoretical groundwork for the international anarchist movement, establishing what came to be known as the

¹⁶ For the Saint-Imier congress, see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:1–11; Stekloff, *First International*, 256–261; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 389–392; Jacques Freymond, ed., *La Première Internationale: Recueil de documents*, 4 vols. (Geneva, 1962–1971), 3:3–9.

¹⁷ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:6–8; Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 3:5–7.

¹⁸ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:8; Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 3:7.

¹⁹ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:8–9; Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 3:7–8.

Anti-Authoritarian International. In contrast to the Marxist International now headquartered in New York, the Anti-Authoritarian International initially attracted many socialists who were unwilling to accept the decisions of the Hague congress. It became the more important of the two Internationals after 1872, having a larger following than its rival, which even Engels admitted was a corpse. The Anti-Authoritarian International—eventually known, as other socialists dropped out, as the Anarchist International—held five congresses between 1872 and 1877, but never achieved the importance of the original IWA. The anarchists ultimately buried it at the London congress of 1881.²⁰

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

The official resolutions of the Saint-Imier congress did not reveal that Bakunin and the anarchists who met in Zurich a week earlier had resolved to organize themselves into a secret society, the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance.²¹ Similar, if not identical, to Bakunin's earlier secret societies, the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance had the same *raison d'être*: to constitute a revolutionary elite that would function secretly as the general staff of the Anti-Authoritarian International. Bakunin had articulated his belief in a revolutionary elite as early as 1865, when he wrote in *Il Popolo d'Italia* that a small number of men, possessed with "heroic madness" and driven by the "absolute, indomitable, intractable character of their faith," could change the world.²² By 1870, he had refined his ideas to embrace the concept of "collective, invisible dictatorship."²³

Anticipating that authoritarian revolutionaries would seek to reconstitute the state once the old order was overthrown, Bakunin insisted that

²⁰ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 246–247; Stekloff, *First International*, 261; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 68; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 391.

²¹ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 2:356, 3:1–2; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 368; Max Nettlau, *Errico Malatesta: La vida de un anarquista* (Buenos Aires, 1923), 62–65. That Bakunin found it necessary to establish an international secret society at this time suggests that the Alliance of Socialist Democracy, which Marx and Engels accused Bakunin of using to subvert the IWA, may not have existed, at least not as a functioning secret society. Lehning denies the existence of the secret Alliance but admits the possible existence of a reconstituted form of the older International Brotherhood. Nettlau considers all Bakunin's secret societies, dating back to the Florentine Brotherhood, to have been reincarnations of each other, possessing some degree of continuity, even if only in spirit. Malatesta referred to the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance as the "Alliance renamed." See Lehning, "Bakunin's Secret Societies," 73–74; Nettlau, "Alcuni documenti sulle origini dell'anarchismo comunista (1876–1880)," in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), October 1, 1933; Malatesta, "La crisi dell'anarchismo," *La Questione Sociale* (Paterson), November 25, 1899.

²² *Il Popolo d'Italia* (Rome), October 22, 1865, in A. Romano, *Storia*, 1:349.

²³ Bakunin to Albert Richard, April 1, 1870, in *Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 178–182.

the collective, invisible dictatorship of anarchists would have to be organized in advance of the revolution if it were to succeed. The anarchist elite

must produce anarchy, and, like invisible pilots in the thick of the popular tempest, must steer it [the revolution] not by any open power but by the collective dictatorship of all the allies—a dictatorship, without insignia, titles or official rights, and all the stronger for having none of the paraphernalia of power.

Bakunin was not blind to the danger of authoritarianism inherent in any elite revolutionary group, and he warned the anarchists that “if you fall to playing at Committees of Public Safety and official, overt dictatorship, you will be devoured by the reaction that you yourselves will have created!”²⁴

Two years later, in the propaganda he disseminated to the Romagnoles, Bakunin advocated the formation of an alliance of militant and well-disciplined activists to operate secretly within the International developing in Italy—constituting, in essence, an Italian branch of the Alliance of Socialist Democracy or a new secret society.²⁵ He explained to Ceretti and others that whereas the Mazzinians wanted to recruit a secret army for a coup, because they believed in revolutions made above the people, the internationalists desired a popular revolution. Consequently, he told them,

you do not need to recruit an army because your army is the people. What you must form are *general staffs*, a well-organized and well-inspired network of chiefs of the popular movement. And for that it is not necessary to have a great number of individuals initiated into the secret organization.²⁶

Ultimately, only the Italian section took shape as a national component of Bakunin's Revolutionary Socialist Alliance, with Cafiero, Costa, Nabruzzi, Fanelli, and Malatesta—all “international brothers”—constituting its leadership.²⁷ Three of these international brothers would soon become the chieftains of Italian anarchism.

CAFIERO, COSTA, MALATESTA

Carlo Cafiero was born into a family of rich landowners and grain merchants in Barletta, Puglia, on September 1, 1846.²⁸ He attended a seminary

²⁴ Ibid., 180–181.

²⁵ Bakunin to Celso Ceretti, March 13–27, 1872, in A. Romano, *Storia*, 2:372–391.

²⁶ Ibid., 388.

²⁷ Lehning, “Bakunin's ‘Secret Societies,’ ” 74.

²⁸ Besides Masini's excellent biography, see Antonio Lucarelli, *Carlo Cafiero* (Trani, 1947), and Franco Damiani, *Carlo Cafiero nella storia del primo socialismo italiano* (Milan, 1974). Also see Pier Carlo Masini and Gianni Bosio, “Bibliografia generale di Carlo Cafiero,” *Movimento*

in Molfetta as a boy and went on to receive a law degree from the University of Naples. Possessing the talent and means to pursue any career path, Cafiero went to Florence after completing his studies, apparently to join the diplomatic service. Friends who knew him in this period described him as a tall, handsome young man with long hair and flowing beard approaching blond in color, whose natural grace and aristocratic bearing gave him an air of great majesty. Very nearsighted, he spoke little, listened intently, and always reflected. The impression Cafiero made upon those who met him was that of a man with a mission.²⁹

In Florence, Cafiero frequented republican circles, subscribed to Luigi Stefanoni's *Il Libero Pensiero*, and dabbled in Islamic and Eastern studies. Exposure to official politics evidently dissuaded Cafiero from pursuing a diplomatic career. He went to Paris at the beginning of 1870, but left in July with the approach of the Franco-Prussian War, settling in London's Italian colony, which had a sizable contingent of Mazzinian exiles. For a time he followed the Free Thought movement of Charles Bradlaugh and attended lectures at the Hall of Science. Cafiero's social conscience was outraged after observing the horrid living conditions of London's East End, and he began attending workers' meetings. A rousing speech by a shoemaker—probably George Odger, one of the founders of the International—drew him to socialism. But it was the emotional impact of the Paris Commune—"what happened inside of us was truly a revolution"³⁰—that transformed Cafiero into a revolutionary. Soon he met Marx and Engels and joined the International. Cafiero's new mentors were very impressed with his intellectual acumen and personal commitment, so they appointed him the General Council's special agent in Italy.³¹

Cafiero returned to Florence in May 1871, establishing contact with the workers' societies led by Grassi and Natta, and arranging for *Il Libero Pensiero* to publish the IWA's official notices. The next month he went to Naples to set up operations for the General Council. A letter from Engels to Gambuzzi introduced him to local internationalists, but as an agent of the General Council he was distrusted by Bakunin's disciples and "put in quarantine."³² Cafiero's sincerity and militancy, however, quickly won over the Neapolitan internationalists, and together with his *paesano* Palladino and young Malatesta, who become his closest friend, Cafiero assumed a leading

Operaio 3, nos. 17–18 (June–September 1951): 701–710. For some of his most important writings, see Carlo Cafiero, *Rivoluzione per la rivoluzione*, ed. Gianni Bosio (Rome, 1970).

²⁹ Masini, *Cafiero*, 11–21; Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 23–26; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 217.

³⁰ Quoted in Masini, *Cafiero*, 25–26.

³¹ Ibid., 19–26; Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, 217.

³² Carmelo Palladino, letter of September 7, 1881, to *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), September 18, 1881.

role in the revival of Naples's IWA section. His reputation enhanced by the arrest and harassment he suffered during the crackdown of August 1871, Cafiero was already considered the "head" of the International in Italy when he attended the Rome congress to battle the Mazzinians. Using this prestige to good advantage, Cafiero attacked Garibaldi's attempt to revive a democratic coalition and pressed the Bologna Fascio Operaio to break completely with Mazzini. When Marx and Engels lost Cafiero's support the following year, they lost not only their principal agent in Italy but a key figure capable of influencing the International's development on a national level.³³

Cafiero was the archetypal Bakuninist during the early 1870s. Once the *gran signore*, he became a true ascetic, dressing in plain clothes, eating simple fare, and eschewing sensual pleasures. To a degree unmatched by any anarchist contemporary, Cafiero invested his entire intellectual, emotional, and spiritual being in the cause, pursuing the social revolution with a single-mindedness and passion that knew no limit. Cafiero's brand of anarchism reflected his emotional extremism and zealousness. He assumed an intransigent position on virtually every issue and rarely compromised. Everything was "now or never," "with us or against us," "all or nothing." He demonstrated this tendency at the Rimini congress by defying Bakunin's wishes and convincing the Italian internationalists to break with the General Council. He did the same as an observer at the Hague congress, where he pressed the anarchist delegates to stay inflexible. James Guillaume, the foremost Bakuninist at the Hague, tried to convince Cafiero that good relations should be maintained between all socialists, regardless of orientation. But Cafiero insisted that the anarchists were better off standing alone than making ideological concessions. So complete and selfless was his commitment that he assumed the role of financial benefactor for the entire movement. With a major fortune in landed property inherited from his parents, Cafiero would pay for his comrades' trips to congresses, the publication of newspapers and leaflets, the legal fees of persecution victims, as well as the rifles and ammunition used in two insurrections. He even purchased a country estate—the Baronata—for Bakunin. Anarchists and socialists of his generation venerated Cafiero as a saint.³⁴

Andrea Costa was born in Imola in the Romagna on November 30, 1851.³⁵ He spent his earliest years in the household of the Orsini family—

³³ Cafiero to Engels, September 10, 1871, and Palladino, "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana," in *Marx e Engels: Corrispondenza*, 41–43, 71–72; Masini, *Cafiero*, 33–43.

³⁴ Masini, *Cafiero*, 13–14, 59, 116–118, 126–144; Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakounine*, 433; Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 22–26, 33–38; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 2: 352; Michels, *Storia critica*, 53–55.

³⁵ A first-rate biography of Costa has yet to be written. For his life, see the romanticized and superficial studies by Lilla Lipparini, *Andrea Costa* (Milan, 1952), and Alessandro Schiavi, *Andrea Costa* (Rome, 1955). A good but very critical account of his political career up to 1894 is provided by the anarchist historian Gino Cerrito, *Andrea Costa nel socialismo italiano* (Rome,

the master of the house was the uncle of Felice Orsini, the republican who tried to assassinate Louis Napoleon in 1858—where his father, Pietro, was employed as a servant until 1861, when he left to open a delicatessen. Appreciating his son's exceptional intelligence, Pietro wished to advance Andrea's education, but as a devout Catholic he sent the boy to parochial schools, where the discipline was harsh and the curriculum barren. Costa's adventurous spirit and love of learning survived the stultifying atmosphere of the clerical schools, and he went on to study with distinction at a public *liceo*. Costa's instructors were so impressed with his academic potential that they prevailed upon his father to send him to the university rather than assist in the family business. Enrolled in the faculty of philosophy and letters at the University of Bologna, Costa became the favorite pupil of Giosuè Carducci, the university's most illustrious faculty member and Italy's leading poet. But academic success did not improve Costa's financial circumstances, and when he failed to receive a scholarship (perhaps for political reasons), he withdrew from the university in 1871.³⁶

By the summer of 1872 Costa was deeply immersed in political activities as a member of the International. His intellectual maturation had begun in adolescence, when he rebelled against his family's traditional Catholic values. His generational revolt was nurtured by wide reading of literature and political philosophy, especially the materialist and rationalist doctrines of Luigi Stefanoni, the freethinker admired by the Italian democratic intelligentsia of the late 1860s. A worldview based on materialism and rationalism led Costa to atheism, a key step in his transformation into an anarchist socialist. Costa's new beliefs were fortified at the University of Bologna by Carducci, who at the end of 1869 had written "Hymn to Satan," depicting Satan as the embodiment of reason's rebellion against obscurantism and the fight of the oppressed for truth and justice. For Costa, atheism became the essential element of human spiritual and material liberation. Together with

1982). More sympathetic accounts are offered by Gonzales in *Costa*, a well-researched study; Valerio Evangelisti and Emanuela Zucchini, *Storia del partito socialista rivoluzionario, 1881–1893* (Bologna, 1981); Marco Pelliconi, *Andrea Costa: Dall'anarchia al socialismo: Il contributo del socialismo imolese e romagnolo alla fondazione del Partito Socialista Italiano (1879–1893)* (Imola, 1979); and the various scholars in Aldo Berselli, ed., *Andrea Costa nella storia del socialismo italiano* (Bologna, 1982). Also useful are the commemorative essays by former comrades in Romeo Galli, ed., *Andrea Costa: Episodi e ricordi della vita di un rivoluzionario* (Milan, 1919), and by Carlo Monticelli, *Andrea Costa e l'Internazionale* (Rome, 1910). For an extensive bibliography, see Renato Zangheri et al., "Scritti di Andrea Costa," *Movimento Operaio* 4, no. 2 (March–April 1952): 360–378. Costa's autobiographical pamphlet *Bagliori di socialismo* is useful but very brief, as are the published diary fragments he wrote while imprisoned in 1898, "Annotazioni autobiografiche per servire alle 'Memorie della mia vita,'" *Movimento Operaio* 4, no. 2 (March–April 1952): 314–356.

³⁶ Schiavi, *Costa*, 47–49; Romeo Galli, "Andrea Costa," in Galli, *Costa*, 5–6; Gonzales, *Costa*, 41–44.

his atheism, of course, went a profound hatred of the Catholic Church. But unlike most anti-clericals and radicals of his generation who became internationalists, Costa had not been a Mazzinian or a Garibaldian prior to the Paris Commune. Nevertheless, like them, he was captivated by the revolt of the Parisian working class and identified the “new spirit” of socialism with the International. His conversion was prompted as much by an emotional need to break with past traditions, which offered nothing to his generation, as by any intellectual conception of a promising future still vaguely defined.³⁷

Costa's new comrades in the Imola socialist group had been reluctant to admit him because he looked so young and innocent. Fairly tall and thin, with thick, unruly hair combed straight back, Costa at age twenty—despite his heavy mustache and pince-nez—still had the appearance of an altar boy. But he was the group's best-educated member (its only nonworker) and possessed valuable literary skills, so when his comrades constituted an IWA section in September 1871, Costa wrote the program and became correspondence secretary, the most important position in every internationalist section. In this capacity, Costa worked with the Bologna Fascio Operaio to help found the Imola Fascio Operaio at the beginning of 1872. Costa represented the fascio at the Bologna regional congress of March 17–19, where he joined the left wing and helped defeat proposals to reconcile with the republicans. While continuing to dominate the Imola group, Costa joined the Bologna Fascio Operaio and began to ascend its hierarchy. When he delivered a eulogy for Francesco Piccinini, the founder of the Lugo Fascio Operaio who had been murdered by republicans in May, Costa demonstrated himself to be an orator of exceptional power and magnetism, a talent that quickly enhanced his reputation and influence. Costa's career advanced again when Erminio Pescatori, consul of the Bologna Fascio Operaio and editor of its paper, resigned together with the entire regional council. (Pescatori had lost face by refusing to fight a duel with a republican challenger.) With the fascio leaderless, Costa, Nabruzzi, and several other comrades seized control in June, restructuring the organization and strengthening ties with other fasci in Emilia, the Romagna, and the Marches. As the new secretary of the Bologna Fascio Operaio, Costa played a key role in organizing the national conference scheduled for that summer.³⁸

The Rimini conference recognized Costa's status as a movement leader by electing him secretary of the Italian Federation's correspondence commission. Following Rimini, he became an international brother in Baku-

³⁷ Aldo Berselli, “La prima formazione del pensiero socialista di Andrea Costa,” in Berselli, *Costa*, 25–34; Schiavi, *Costa*, 47–49; Costa, “Annotazioni autobiografiche,” 322–324, and *Bagliori di socialismo*, 12.

³⁸ Gonzales, *Costa*, 45–48, 57–60.

nin's Revolutionary Socialist Alliance, participated in the Saint-Imier congress, and attended Bakunin's strategy sessions at Neuchatel and Zurich a few days later. After his comrades returned home, Costa spent several days with Bakunin in Zurich, publishing a single issue of *La Rivoluzione Sociale* in Neuchatel, a newspaper intended for distribution in Italy. He returned home at the end of September to undertake an organizing campaign.³⁹

Errico Malatesta, the youngest member of the Italian anarchist triumvirate, was born on December 4, 1853, in Santa Maria Capua Vetere, a garrison town in the province of Caserta, not far from Naples.⁴⁰ Legend maintained that Malatesta's ancestor was Sigismondo Malatesta, the fifteenth-century tyrant of Rimini. In reality, his social origins were middle-class. His father owned a leather tanning factory and some landed property. As a boy, Malatesta went to elementary school in Santa Maria and later boarded at a liceo operated by the Scolopi Fathers in Naples, where his family had moved in 1864. Despite the clerical instructors, "school did not succeed in suffocating my nature, and in the midst of the cretinizing and corrupting environment of the modern boarding school, I maintained a

³⁹ Ibid., 61–64; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 63–64; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:43.

⁴⁰ The principal biographies of Malatesta were written by fellow anarchists: Max Nettlau, *Errico Malatesta: La vida de un anarquista* (Buenos Aires, 1923); Luis [Luigi] Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta* (Barcelona, 1938) and *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero* (Naples, 1951); Armando Borghi, *Errico Malatesta* (Milan, 1947). Fabbri's sharper insights complement Nettlau's greater detail, while Borghi's strength is anecdotal. The Italian edition of Nettlau's biography, *Errico Malatesta: Vita e pensieri* (New York, 1922), is generally more available, but the Spanish edition is more accurate and detailed. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations are to the Spanish edition.

Other noteworthy studies include Stefano Arcangeli, *Errico Malatesta e il comunismo anarchico italiano* (Milan, 1972); Misato Toda, *Errico Malatesta da Mazzini a Bakunin: La sua formazione giovanile nell'ambiente napoletano (1868–1873)* (Naples, 1988); Paolo Finzi, *La nota persona: Errico Malatesta in Italia (dicembre 1919/luglio 1920)* (Ragusa, 1990).

For brief but excellent biographical portraits, see Max Nettlau, "Sidelights on Malatesta," *Freedom Bulletin* 15 (December 1932): 2–7; Vernon Richards, "Notes for a Biography," in his anthology *Errico Malatesta: His Life & Ideas* (London, 1965), 201–242; Gino Cerrito, "Nota biografica," in his edition of *Scritti scelti* (Rome, 1970), 48–60.

For an informative account of Malatesta's many years of exile in London, see Carl Levy, "Malatesta in Exile," *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 15 (1981): 245–280.

Several important collections of Malatesta's articles and letters have been published by Italian anarchists: *Scritti*, ed. Luigi Fabbri, 3 vols. (Geneva and Brussels, 1934–1936); *Scritti scelti*, ed. Cesare Zaccaria and Giovanna Berneri (Naples, 1947); *Scritti scelti*, eds. Giovanna Berneri and Cesare Zaccaria (Naples, 1954), which contains different material than the 1947 collection published by the same editors; Cerrito's anthology, cited above, and his edition of *Rivoluzione e lotta quotidiana: Scritti scelti* (Milan, 1982); *Errico Malatesta epistolario: Lettere edite e inedite, 1873–1932*, ed. Rosaria Bertolucci (Avenza, 1984).

For an extensive bibliography of Malatesta's pamphlets, articles, and other writings, as well as articles about him, see Ugo Fedeli, *Bibliografia Malatestiana* (Naples, 1951), which is reproduced in Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*.

healthy mind and a pure heart.”⁴¹ Malatesta later studied medicine for several years at the University of Naples, withdrawing in late 1871 or early 1872 to devote himself to the socialist revolution.⁴²

Although Malatesta had read widely in literature, history, and philosophy as a youth, his political development was not significantly influenced by any process of intellectual discovery and evolution such as Costa and Cafiero had undergone. “Theories,” he wrote years later, “are uncertain and changing concepts; and philosophy, consisting generally of hypotheses inhabiting the clouds, has essentially little or no influence on life.”⁴³ Malatesta was a born revolutionary whose anarchism evolved from his own nature, combining a deep love of humanity and hatred of oppression with an indomitable spirit. The poverty and injustice Malatesta observed around him as a boy generated dreams of becoming a tribune of the people. At age fourteen, Malatesta initiated a private war against the Savoy monarchy by writing an insolent and boldly subversive letter to King Vittorio Emanuele II in Florence. Police agents sent to arrest Malatesta on March 25, 1868, were shocked to discover that the offending radical was scarcely more than a boy. They brought him to the police station, where he was interrogated for hours and threatened with incarceration in a correctional institution. Efforts to frighten Malatesta into revealing the culprit who had instigated the letter—they could not believe he had acted on his own initiative—proved futile. Malatesta insisted the letter was his alone. He was finally released after his father’s influential friends interceded. Back home, instead of the caning he expected, Malatesta received a heart-to-heart talk from his father, a man of liberal values who was more frightened than angered by his son’s behavior. When the senior Malatesta suggested that Errico keep his views to himself, the boy avowed: “But it is useless to have ideas if you do not express and promote them, if you do not fight for them!” “My poor son,” his father responded in tearful resignation, “it distresses me to say it, but you will end on the gallows!”⁴⁴

At the University of Naples, Malatesta associated with young republicans and applied for membership in Mazzini’s *Alleanza Repubblicana Universale*. His application was rejected, allegedly because Mazzini suspected him of socialist tendencies and predicted he would defect to the International. In the spring of 1871, when news of the Paris Commune enthralled young

⁴¹ Malatesta (unsigned), “La repubblica dei giovanetti e quella degli uomini colla barba,” *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), January 5, 1884.

⁴² Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 9–10; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 61; Toda, *Malatesta*, 13–14.

⁴³ Malatesta, “Michele Bakunin,” *Pensieri e Volontà* (Rome), July 1, 1926, in *Scritti*, 3:243.

⁴⁴ Luigi Fabbri, “Il primo arresto di Errico Malatesta,” in *Almanacco libertario pro vittime politiche per l'anno 1933* (Geneva, 1933), 35. Malatesta related this story to Fabbri.

radicals throughout Italy, Malatesta began frequenting internationalist circles in Naples, where Fanelli and Palladino became his close friends. Under the combined influence of their socialist teachings and the impact of the Commune, Malatesta joined the Naples section of the IWA in May 1871. Arrested after the government dissolved the section in August 1871, Malatesta was not brought to trial, and for the rest of the year he helped rebuild the organization with Tucci and Cafiero. In the process, Malatesta and Cafiero established a partnership that would endure for more than a decade and a friendship that ended only with death. When the Naples IWA section reconstituted itself as the Federazione Operaia Napoletana, the eighteen-year-old Malatesta was elected secretary general and served on *La Campana's* editorial staff. Although a member of the Neapolitan delegation, Malatesta did not attend the Rimini conference, for reasons never explained. He was elected nonetheless to the Federation's statistics commission—a position that recognized his importance as a leader in the movement, but one for which the young firebrand was temperamentally unsuited. The following month he went to Zurich for his first meeting with Bakunin.⁴⁵

The young man who crossed the Swiss frontier in September 1872 was short and wiry, with dark curly hair, a mustache, deep-set eyes, and sharply chiseled features. He seemed to radiate intense passion and explosive energy. Yet despite the vigorous image he projected, Malatesta was sickly as a youth. Doctors had diagnosed him as a consumptive and predicted he would not live past his twenty-fourth year, an ominous prognosis supported by the fact that his father, mother, sister, and a brother had all died of lung disease by 1870.⁴⁶

After completing the strenuous journey across the Gottard Pass, Malatesta arrived at Bakunin's Zurich residence on September 7, feverish and coughing blood. The old Russian, "with a maternal tenderness and concern that touched my heart," covered Malatesta with every available blanket and overcoat, plied him with hot tea, and bade him stay quiet and sleep. Later that night, he overheard Bakunin talking in a low voice to the other comrades, saying flattering things about him but adding sadly: "Too bad he is so sick. We will lose him soon; he hasn't more than six months." But Malatesta, too young and spirited to contemplate his own mortality, thought "it almost would have been a crime to die when there was so much to do for humanity. I felt happy to have that man's esteem and promised myself to do everything to merit it." Indeed, Malatesta "awoke cured" the following morning and was able to participate in the "interminable discussions" into

⁴⁵ Palladino, "Relazione sulla Sezione Napoletana," 72; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 61–63; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 39–45; Toda, *Malatesta*, 50–55.

⁴⁶ Although he lived to age 78, Malatesta was afflicted with pulmonary problems (chronic bronchitis and occasional pneumonia) throughout his life.

which Bakunin and his disciples immersed themselves over the next few days. Having enrolled as a full-fledged international brother (code name "Beniamino") in Bakunin's Revolutionary Socialist Alliance, Malatesta attended the Saint-Imier congress and returned two days later to Zurich, where he remained with Bakunin until September 23. A half-century later, Malatesta could still evoke the deep emotion and visions that Bakunin aroused in his disciples:

It was impossible for a youth to have contact with him without feeling himself inflamed by a sacred fire, without seeing his own horizons broadened, without feeling himself a knight of a noble cause, without carrying out high-minded objectives.

And this happened to all who fell under his influence.⁴⁷

In Malatesta, Costa, and Cafiero, Bakunin found young warriors in whom the "sacred fire" burned with searing intensity. The intellectual and spiritual influence exercised upon this dynamic triumvirate by the charismatic Russian for the next few years was profound, with the result that the Italian Federation developed in strict accordance with the Bakuninist theory of revolutionary organization. As Malatesta explained years later,

All of us [in 1872] were before all things members of the secret Alliance, and as such we founded sections of the International for the purpose of creating a medium within which we could realize the ideas and objectives of the Alliance.⁴⁸

Although predominantly working-class in social composition, the Italian Federation was not a labor organization devoted to improving the material conditions of workers and peasants. It was, in reality, a political society with a dual organization: large-scale, public, and open to all (not just workers) who accepted its program, on the one hand; and secret and restricted, composed of devoted revolutionaries, several belonging to Bakunin's secret Revolutionary Socialist Alliance, on the other. This elite group of anarchists, as Malatesta acknowledged, would dominate the Italian Federation and channel its energy toward a single objective—social revolution.⁴⁹

THE BOLOGNA CONGRESS

Believing that a popular uprising was imminent, the Italian members of the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance undertook a campaign to build the Italian Federation and refine its ideology in accordance with Bakuninist doctrines.

⁴⁷ Malatesta, "Il mio primo incontro con Bakunin," 247. Also Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 63–64; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 63.

⁴⁸ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 64. Malatesta related this to Nettlau in 1904.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Costa, as correspondence secretary, issued a flood of letters between October 1872 and March 1873, urging the formation of new sections and broad adherence to the next national congress, scheduled to convene in the Emilian town of Mirandola on March 15, 1873. But the Italian government, alarmed by the Federation's rapid growth and the wave of strikes and demonstrations in the winter of 1872–1873, had no intention of permitting the internationalists to meet and conspire. Forewarned, the police took “preventive measures,” arresting key internationalists and dissolving the Mirandola section on March 12. The city was then occupied by the military and the police instructed to apprehend all delegates who arrived. Although some were captured on March 14, Costa and his associates managed to divert the majority of delegates to Bologna, where they met in an unused clothing factory. More than fifty delegates, representing around 150 sections, held their proceedings from March 15 to 16. Late in the evening of March 16, police raided the headquarters of the Bologna Federation, arresting Cafiero, Costa, Malatesta, and five others. The next day saw more arrests and the dissolution of the Bologna Federation and the IWA sections in San Giovanni in Persiceto, Modena, Parma, and Imola. The delegates who escaped the police dragnet, joined by new arrivals sent to replace those arrested, met secretly in another locale and completed their work on March 17.⁵⁰

The Bologna congress crystallized the Bakuninist orientation of the Italian Federation. The delegates embraced the “Pact of Friendship, Solidarity, and Mutual Defense” adopted at Saint-Imier in order “to save the true spirit and true unity of the International against the authoritarian and dissolvent intrigues of the centralizers.” The authoritarian communism of Marx was rejected and the General Council condemned for its efforts to establish a dictatorship. All member federations, sections, and individuals were declared free to choose their own political program and to organize publically or secretly, so long as they did not oppose the national federation's goal—“*the complete and direct emancipation of the proletariat through the efforts of the proletariat*.” Opposition to “political action”—participation in political elections—was endorsed, and alliances with bourgeois revolutionaries were rejected, thereby distancing the internationalists from the republicans.⁵¹

Bologna echoed Saint-Imier in matters of doctrine and strategy. Declaring war against God, the state, and private property, the delegates embraced

⁵⁰ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 50–51, 55–59; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), April 1, 1873; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 90–91; Gonzales, *Costa*, 64–65; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 74–75; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 185–186. The official report records around sixty delegates, representing eleven local federations and twenty-four sections. The correspondence commission indicated to the Jurassienne Federation that there were fifty-three delegates, representing 150 sections.

⁵¹ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 61–62, 64.

atheism, materialism, anarchism, federalism, and collectivism. To achieve these objectives, they advocated a revolutionary alliance between the city workers and the peasant masses. The "highest duty" of the city workers was to promote vigorous propaganda in the countryside, since "fourteen million peasants in Lombardy and the southern provinces are in agony because of fever and hunger and anxiously await the hour of emancipation." The Bologna congress created a propaganda commission to disseminate the ideas of the Federation.⁵²

The congress also recommended restructuring the Federation's organizational base. Individual sections usually combined workers of different occupations. Now, following the pattern Costa established in Imola, the delegates recommended that sections organize according to job categories and federate into craft and trade unions, a change that would increase their effectiveness in economic struggles. Yet, despite Saint-Imier's endorsement of strikes as a means to prepare for revolution, the Bologna congress was noncommittal on the use of this basic method of economic struggle, recommending only that sections study "all methods of resistance." Italian anarchists still remained unenthusiastic about strikes as a weapon against capitalism.⁵³

The final order of business, after the election of various commissions, was the case of Carlo Terzaghi, the Turin journalist suspected of being a spy. At a special session amounting to a trial, the delegates heard Costa present the evidence that Cafiero had compiled during a two-month investigation, proving that Terzaghi was in league with the police of Turin. They expelled him from the Federation. But Terzaghi survived this disgrace, attracted a small group of "intransigents" on the fringe of the movement, and continued to publish newspapers in Italy and Switzerland that facilitated his career as an informer and agent provocateur. He was still plying his trade in the early 1890s.⁵⁴

FROM BOLOGNA TO GENEVA

Cafiero, Malatesta, and Costa were released from jail on May 9, when the courts ruled that the government lacked grounds to prosecute. Cafiero went immediately to Barletta, where he sold some property for funds to purchase the Baronata, a villa near Locarno. He planned to transform the Baronata into a safe haven for Bakunin and a clandestine headquarters for anarchists plotting revolution. Malatesta joined Bakunin in Locarno at the end of June to assess the cantonalist movement—a bourgeois federalist rebellion—that was flaring in southern Spain.

⁵² Ibid., 63–66.

⁵³ Ibid., 65–66; Gonzales, *Costa*, 64–65.

⁵⁴ For the Terzaghi case, see Masini, *Cafiero*, 97–117.

The International was considerably stronger in Spain than in Italy, and Bakunin was optimistic that social revolution might erupt there at any time. The July 9 uprising of anarchist workers in Alcoy, a town near Valencia noted for its manufacture of paper and textiles, convinced him to go to Spain and lead his disciples on the barricades. Malatesta, whose life-long affinity for the Spanish anarchist movement began when he met Morago and other Iberians in Zurich the previous September, planned to accompany Bakunin on this perilous mission. He was arrested, however, when he went to Barletta to obtain traveling funds from Cafiero. Charged with conspiracy against the state, Malatesta spent the next six months imprisoned in Trani awaiting a trial that would never take place. Cafiero, meanwhile, refused to finance Bakunin's journey to Spain because he considered the Russian too important to risk death. When Cafiero arrived in Locarno in mid-August, the Spanish government had nearly extinguished the cantonalist uprising, and suppression of the Spanish Federation was imminent. He therefore had little difficulty convincing Bakunin to go ahead with their plans to acquire the Baronata rather than die for a lost cause.⁵⁵

With Malatesta in jail and Cafiero preoccupied with the Baronata, Costa undertook a brief but successful reorganizing campaign to revive the Federation, after which he attended the Anti-Authoritarian International congress in Geneva from September 1 to 6.⁵⁶ Reporting on the status of the International in Italy, Costa declared that "Italian workers have little concern for theories. What they want is struggle." On matters of organization and tactics, he took the hardline position characteristic of the Italian anarchists at every international congress. He strongly opposed replacing the General Council with some other form of centralized administrative body, arguing that the only way to demolish the authoritarian structure of the International was to strike it at its base. As for the general strike, advocated widely by antiauthoritarian socialists, Costa declared it an excellent means of revolution but dismissed partial strikes as "dust thrown into the eyes of the workers." The discussion that roused Costa to true eloquence, however, was whether membership in the International should be restricted to workers. Utterly opposed to the concept of worker exclusivism, Costa asserted that if, as some socialists advocated, the International denied admission to "workers of thought"—that is, bourgeois intellectuals—the forces of the revolution would be greatly weakened and the principles of the International violated:

⁵⁵ Masini, *Cafiero*, 124–125, 129–130; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:97–98; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 71–72; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), December 7, 1873.

⁵⁶ For the Geneva congress, see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:108–134; Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:5–157; Stekloff, *First International*, 287–292. The other delegates representing the Italian Federation were Cesare Bert, Francesco Mattei, and Victor Cyrille.

The goal of the International is the abolition of classes and the establishment of human brotherhood. Would it be consistent with our goal to consecrate in the very bosom of our association the distinction between classes that we wish to abolish? . . . For me, there are only two categories of men, those who want the revolution and those who do not. And there are some bourgeois who want the revolution much more energetically and seriously than certain workers.⁵⁷

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION OF THE ITALIAN FEDERATION

After the Geneva congress, Costa conferred with Bakunin in Locarno about plans to create a *Comitato Italiano per la Rivoluzione Sociale* (CIRS), a clandestine organization that would prepare for revolution.⁵⁸ Costa became so absorbed with the affairs of this secret committee that he resigned as secretary of the Federation's correspondence commission. Nevertheless, the momentum generated by Costa's campaign to organize new local sections and federate them on a regional basis was sustained throughout the rest of 1873 and the first months of 1874. The following chart provides a statistical breakdown of membership in the Italian Federation for the spring of 1874:⁵⁹

<i>Federation</i>	<i>Sections</i>		<i>Members</i>	
	<i>February</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>April</i>
Tuscany	31	36	6,941	8,000
Emilia-Romagna	21	30	3,765	6,000
Naples and Southern Italy	18	17	4,265	4,500
Marches, Umbria, and Lazio	16	18	3,091	4,000
Sicily	14	15	3,619	4,000
Piedmont	7	8	1,300	2,000
Venetia	7	9	1,642	1,800
Lombardy	9	11	1,432	1,650
Liguria	5	6	400	500
Sardinia	1	1	250	?
Totals	129	155	26,704	32,450

⁵⁷ For Costa's report and statements, see Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:37–38, 54, 61, 71, 91.

⁵⁸ Discussed in Chapter 4.

⁵⁹ The February figures were derived from a confiscated Federation report (undated but probably January) to the International Commission in Brussels. The April figures were cited in

Membership in the Italian Federation was probably less than the totals claimed by either the statistics commission or the police, but the number of workers sympathetic to the International was undoubtedly much higher than official membership reflected. The police chief of Florence acknowledged as much: "In general, there are many workers and artisans who support its principles but abstain from joining the International because they fear being discharged by their employers or because they cannot afford to pay the dues."⁶⁰ Whatever the figures, the Italian Federation established the pattern of regional representation that the anarchist movement retained, with slight modification, for the rest of the century.

The movement's strength in the northern regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, and Venetia was modest in 1874 and subsequent years. Anarchism in the Mezzogiorno was restricted to Naples, Sicily, and a few small enclaves in Puglia and Calabria. The real stronghold of Italian anarchism was north-central Italy. The Tuscan federation surpassed the Romagnole in sections and membership by 1874. Thereafter, Tuscany provided the anarchist movement with its largest and most militant following. The Marches and Umbria had smaller representation than the Emilia-Romagna in the 1870s, but by the late 1890s the Marches would have more groups than any other region. Liguria ranked low in the 1870s, but its anarchist following increased significantly in the late 1880s and 1890s. In terms of cities and towns, the Italian Federation attracted supporters not only in major urban centers like Rome, Milan, Turin, Florence, Bologna, Naples, Palermo, Genoa, and Venice, but in many medium-sized and small communities, and even in remote provinces. In fact, the distinct subculture and worldview that emerged among anarchist workers in the nineteenth century was probably richer and more intense in the provincial centers than elsewhere.⁶¹

SOCIAL COMPOSITION

Misconceptions about the social composition of the Italian Federation have persisted since the days of the International. They are attributable largely to the distorted image of Italian anarchists depicted in the pamphlet *L'Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste et l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, published a few weeks before the Geneva congress in September 1873. The

a report from the police chief of Rome to his prefect that same month. Franco Della Peruta, "La consistenza numerica dell'Internazionale in Italia nel 1874," *Movimento Operaio* 2, nos. 3–4 (December 1949–January 1950): 104–106. The accuracy of these figures cannot be determined.

⁶⁰ Report of June 4, 1873, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 156.

⁶¹ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 86–87. For a useful map indicating the anarchist movement's geographic distribution between 1891 and 1898, see Enzo Santarelli, "L'anarchisme en Italie," *Le Mouvement Social* 83 (April–June 1973): 139.

pamphlet purported to represent the findings of the commission delegated by the Hague congress the previous year to investigate Bakunin's secret Alliance, but it was actually drawn up by Engels and Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue. Marx only edited one or two of the concluding pages, but he was no less responsible for its contents than were his associates.⁶²

The Alliance pamphlet, seeking to disparage the anarchists with Bakunin's own words, quotes a letter from "the holy father" to a Spanish disciple:

There is in Italy that which is lacking in other countries: an ardent, energetic youth, completely displaced, without career, without an outlet, and that despite its bourgeois origins is not morally and intellectually enfeebled like the bourgeois youth of other countries.⁶³

After identifying the leaders of the Alliance and the Italian Federation as "displaced" members of the bourgeoisie, Engels denigrates them as alienated incompetents, ne'er-do-wells, and opportunists who constitute an obstacle to the development of a workers' International in Italy. His famous passage reads:

The Alliance in Italy is not a "workers' group" [*faïscan ouvrier*], but a gang of déclassés, the refuse of the bourgeoisie. All the so-called sections of the Italian International are led by lawyers without clients, by doctors without patients or knowledge, by billiard-playing students, by commercial travelers and other salesmen, and especially by journalists of the minor press, of more or less dubious reputation. Italy is the only country where the International press—or what calls itself such—has acquired the typical characteristics of *Le Figaro*. One need only glance at the writing of the secretaries of these so-called sections to realize that it is the work of clerks or professional authors. By taking over all the official posts in the section in this way, the Alliance managed to compel the Italian workers, every time they wanted to enter into relations with one another or with other councils of the International, to resort to the services of déclassé members of the Alliance who found in the International a "career" and a "way out."⁶⁴

The great Swiss sociologist Roberto Michels argued more than eighty years ago that the term déclassés, in the pejorative sense employed by Engels

⁶² Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life* (Ann Arbor, 1962), 496–497. Mehring, a noted Marxist historian whose 1918 biography remains a classic, placed the Alliance pamphlet "below anything else Marx and Engels ever published. . . . [It] is not a historical document, but a one-sided indictment whose tendentious character is apparent on every page of it."

⁶³ Bakunin to Francisco Mora, April 5, 1872, in [Friedrich Engels], *L'Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste et l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs: Rapport et documents publics par ordre du congrès internationale de la Haye* (London, 1873), 136. For an English version of this rare pamphlet, see *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Collected Works*, 41 vols. to date (New York, 1975–1992), 23:454–580.

⁶⁴ [Engels], *Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste*, 48.

and Marx, does not apply to Bakunin's Italian disciples. The Italian internationalists were not *déclassés* because they were unable to succeed as middle-class professionals; nor had they chosen a "way out" of their socioeconomic dilemma by pursuing a "career" as leaders of the Federation. Men of outstanding intelligence and ability, Cafiero, Costa, Malatesta, and scores of other Italian internationalists were *déclassés* (in Italian: *spostati*) only in the literal sense of no longer belonging to the bourgeoisie. More accurately, as Michels explains, they were *autospostati* (in German: *Sichselbstdeklassierende*): revolutionaries of bourgeois origin who had declassed themselves voluntarily to fight for the emancipation of the working class and of humanity.⁶⁵ Bakunin had understood this about the Italian internationalists, declaring in his *Étatisme et Anarchie* (1873) that "hating the existing order with all their being. . . , [they] turned their backs on the class of their birth and dedicated themselves completely to the cause of the people."⁶⁶

The great majority of Italian internationalists, however, did not have to renounce their social origins. Membership rolls of the sections, as well as the lists of the hundreds of internationalists brought to trial, prove that salaried workers, journeymen artisans, and independent artisans predominated. Their occupations reflected the Italian economy of the 1870s: bakers, barbers, blacksmiths, bookkeepers, butchers, cabinet makers, carpenters, carters, coachmen, construction laborers, engravers, glazers, house painters, knife grinders, lamplighters, masons, mechanics, printers, saddlers, shoemakers, stevedores, stonecutters, tailors, upholsterers, waiters.

The independent artisans among the internationalists were as much a part of the nascent labor movement as salaried workers because of their inferior social status and the precariousness of their economic well-being in the face of rising industrial capitalism. The artisans, however, enjoyed certain advantages over other working-class elements (especially workers in the few large factories operating in this period) that enhanced their importance to the Italian Federation. Whereas factory workers were in a state of near-total subjugation by virtue of long hours, fatigue, illiteracy, fear of discharge, and other forms of dominance exercised by owners, the artisans had slightly greater economic security, better education, more freedom of movement, and relative independence. The artisan, for example, could use his shop as a meeting place, and devote his free time to study and propaganda. Furthermore, the artisans had a revolutionary tradition dating from the Risorgimento, which, together with their superior political awareness,

⁶⁵ Roberto Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia nel movimento socialista italiano: Saggio di scienza sociografico-politica* (Turin, 1908), 63–72. For the concept of the *autospostati*, see also Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 101–103.

⁶⁶ *Archives Bakounine*, ed. Lehning et al. (Leiden, 1967), vol. 3, *Étatisme et anarchie*, 1873, 205.

receptivity to new ideas, and individualistic spirit, made them natural opponents of the existing order.⁶⁷

Artisans and workers adhered to the International through a variety of affiliate organizations: mutual aid societies, cooperatives, *fasci operai*, and other embryonic forms of trade unions. The sections to which these societies belonged tended to be occupationally mixed. After the Bologna congress, the Italian Federation attempted to reorganize sections according to job categories, primarily to increase their ability to help striking workers financially. The Tuscan Federation had several large sections organized in this manner: metalworkers (500 members), shoemakers (700), and masons (1700). But such efforts succeeded only in places like Florence, where there were enough militant workers in a given category to organize. Most sections remained occupationally mixed and organized like democratic political societies.⁶⁸

Whereas several women with exceptional talent became nationally prominent figures in the anarchist movement during the twentieth century—Nella Giacomelli, Leda Rafanelli, Virgilia D'Andrea, Giovanna and Maria Luisa Berneri—sources for the 1870s identify only a few women anarchists as leaders of the Italian International, notably Luisa ("Gigia") Minguzzi, the companion of Francesco Pezzi, in the Tuscan Federation, and Vincenza Matteuzzi in the Marchigian-Umbrian Federation. But women were certainly active among the anarchist rank and file. By 1876, the Italian Federation had organized several sections and affiliate groups (Florence, Aquila, Imola, Perugia, Carrara, and Prato) that were composed entirely of working-class women. They had their own feminist programs, conducted propaganda, attended congresses, and suffered police persecution together with the men. Their groups offered a rare opportunity for working-class women to participate in Italian political life.⁶⁹

Ironically, the social element with the least representation in the Italian Federation was the one that Bakunin believed possessed the greatest revolutionary potential—the peasantry.⁷⁰ Whereas Spanish anarchism in the 1870s attracted a large following among the landless laborers (*braceros*) and small-plot owners of Andalusia and the Levante, the movement in Italy acquired only limited support from the *braccianti* (farm laborers paid daily

⁶⁷ For the social composition of the Italian Federation, see Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia*, 79–83; Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 99–101; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 145.

⁶⁸ Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia*, 76–78; Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 99–101; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 145.

⁶⁹ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 105; Masini, *FI: Atti*, 121, 137, 271–273, 332–335; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 364n. 11; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 195.

⁷⁰ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 99.

or by season), primarily in the Romagna and Tuscany, where the International was strongest.⁷¹ Despite outward similarities between the two countries, several factors accounted for the development of a large anarchist following among peasants in Spain but not Italy.

The dissolution of small-scale proprietorships in Spain had been underway for many years before the rise of the International, both in regions like Andalusia, New Castille, and Estremadura, where the great estates or *latifundios* predominated, and those like Leon and Old Castille, where small plots were the norm. Proletarianization produced strong receptivity to anarchist ideas and labor organization among Spanish peasants in the early 1870s. But in Italy during this period, the displacement of small-scale proprietors was just beginning, due to the lateness of unification. The major agricultural crisis that accelerated the proletarianization of the small-plot holder in Italy, especially in the Po Valley, occurred during the early and mid-1880s, several years after the International had collapsed, when anarchism was in decline. Another factor favoring the International in Spain was the geographic proximity of capitalist agriculture and industry: olive and wine producing areas along the Mediterranean coast, where anarchism took root among the peasants, were close to rising manufacturing centers like Barcelona, where the movement flourished among factory workers. The contiguousness of these two capitalist zones helped the International develop in the countryside, as workers and peasants interacted. Nothing comparable existed in Italy during the internationalist period. Wine grapes and olives grown for export were cultivated by *braccianti* on large estates in Sicily and Puglia, regions where there was neither modern industry nor appreciable interaction between peasants and urban artisans who might transmit radical ideas. In the Po Valley, where capitalist industry was beginning to develop in certain provinces, the International had sections in non-industrial cities like Parma, Mantua, and Modena, and some of its propaganda reached the surrounding countryside. But in marked contrast to Spain, most of the Italian *braccianti* at this time demonstrated little enthusiasm for organization and coordinated economic resistance, and the internationalists evidenced little inclination to convince them otherwise and inculcate anarchist ideas.⁷²

Anarchist leaders complained frequently about the difficulties of organizing the peasants. Costa, early in 1874, lamented the lack of communication in the countryside and the ignorance of its inhabitants.⁷³ Malatesta, report-

⁷¹ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 77; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 156–157.

⁷² For a comparative analysis of the movements in Spain and Italy, see the excellent study by Eva Civolani, *L'Anarchismo dopo la Comune: I casi italiano e spagnolo* (Milan, 1981), 47–59. The anarchists' lack of support among the *braccianti* of the Po Valley is discussed further in Chapter 11.

⁷³ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), February 22, 1874.

ing to the London congress in 1881, said that organizing the peasants had been “immensely difficult.”⁷⁴ Certainly most of the peasants with whom the internationalists had to deal were utterly lacking in political consciousness and were unreceptive to socialism and labor organization, inclining instead toward spontaneous and uncoordinated acts of rebellion that were always suppressed.⁷⁵ But it is equally true that the Italian anarchists never carried out a systematic campaign to overcome such obstacles and recruit the *braccianti* for the International—despite Bakunin’s insistence on the need to organize landless peasants. They rationalized their lack of a peasant following on the grounds that the revolutionary instincts and spontaneity of the peasants would compensate for the lack of formal organization in the countryside.⁷⁶ The insurrections of 1874 and 1877 proved otherwise.

⁷⁴ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), July 23, 1881.

⁷⁵ Masini, “La Prima Internazionale in Italia,” 99. Cerrito believes that Masini’s interpretation of the peasants’ “state of pre-class consciousness” does not go far enough to explain the problem. He claims that strong ties could not be established because, in addition to peasant backwardness, the objectives motivating the internationalists were not those motivating the peasants. In the case of Sicily, moreover, Cerrito suspects that early internationalist propaganda may have been inadequate because several leading figures of the movement—notably Friscia and Riggio—were local landowners. See his “Il movimento anarchico dalle sue origini al 1914: Problemi e orientamenti storiografici,” *Rassegna Storica Toscana* 16, no. 1 (January-June 1968): 115.

⁷⁶ See Costa’s (unsigned) report to the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), February 22, 1874.

INSURRECTION AND REPRESSION,
1874–1876

REVOLUTIONARY EXPECTATIONS AND THE
CRISIS OF 1873–1874

Italy in 1873–1874 experienced its worst economic crisis since unification. The dislocations symptomatic of the transition from an agricultural/artisanal to an industrial economy were beginning to be felt. Fiscal policies implemented by Finance Minister Sella in the late 1860s had failed to balance the budget, and the government's issuing huge amounts of paper money caused wild speculation and runaway inflation. Poor harvests for two consecutive years intensified the pressure on prices, so by mid-1873 workers in some cities had to spend as much as one-third of their daily wages to purchase a kilogram of bread. Popular discontent mounted steadily in the face of rising prices and unemployment. Wage strikes and cost-of-living demonstrations multiplied in Florence, Livorno, Pisa, Rome, the Neapolitan provinces, and central Lazio throughout 1873, then spread northward the following spring to Forlì, Imola, Mantua, Parma, Cremona, and Padua, where troops suppressed the rioters. The unrest climaxed in June and July of 1874, when empty granaries awaited the new harvest, and the last supplies of wheat and other cereals became scarce and more costly. A score of cities and towns in Tuscany, Emilia, and the Romagna saw large crowds of demonstrators—frequently comprising women and children—protest food prices, assault bakers and grain merchants, sack bread shops, and attack trains loaded with wheat. Despite the deployment of all available troops and carabinieri, the popular upheavals seemed uncontrollable.¹

Observing the escalating crisis in the autumn of 1873, Bakunin, Costa, and Cafiero decided that the time was ripe for an insurrection. In his last major theoretical work, *Étatisme et Anarchie*, completed just prior to this decision, Bakunin expressed the belief that “nowhere are there more favorable conditions for the Social Revolution than in Italy.” Whereas Marx and Engels discounted Italy because it had not developed large-scale industry

¹ A. Romano, *Storia del movimento socialista in Italia* (Milan and Rome, 1956), vol. 3, *La scapigliatura romantica e la liquidazione teorica dell'anarchismo* (1872–1882), 94–96, 197–201; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 128–131, 169–172; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 327–329; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 99–100.

and its proletariat still lacked political consciousness, Bakunin believed that Italy's revolutionary potential derived precisely from its economic and social backwardness. Although young internationalists of bourgeois origin would initiate and lead, the real power behind the revolution would come from the "proletariat." This was not, however, the same proletariat to which Marx had assigned revolutionary hegemony. The Russian anarchist considered the factory workers of industrialized countries already compromised by the relative affluence they had acquired together with bourgeois values. Italy had very few of these "bourgeois workers" because of her industrial underdevelopment. She possessed instead a Lumpenproletariat, a "proletariat in rags," which Bakunin described as being "endowed with extraordinary intelligence, but in great part illiterate and miserably poor, consisting of two or three million workers laboring in the cities and in factories, as well as small craftsmen and around twenty million peasants who own nothing."²

Poverty and desperation alone, Bakunin insisted, were not sufficient to rouse the Italian masses in their entirety. Such conditions could provoke local acts of rebellion but not a social revolution. For this to happen the masses had to be inspired by a "universal ideal," a passionate, almost religious belief in their rights, evolving from the depths of popular instinct and nurtured by hard and bitter experience. "When this ideal and this faith are united in the masses, together with misery that drives them to despair, then the social revolution is near and inevitable, and there is no force that can prevent it." "This," Bakunin proclaimed, "is exactly the situation of the Italian proletariat," which possesses a greater degree of "passionate revolutionary consciousness" than even the Russian masses, "a consciousness which daily becomes stronger and clearer," resulting in an understanding of "what it wants and what must be done to achieve its complete emancipation." Bakunin gave credit for stimulating "this profound sentiment, this universal ideal" among the Italian masses to the International.³

The possibility cannot be dismissed—given his propensity to mistake, as Herzen said, "the second month of pregnancy for the ninth"—that Bakunin genuinely believed Italy was on the verge of social revolution. On the other hand, Bakunin's assurances about the growing revolutionary consciousness of the Italian masses and the imminency of revolution may have been a function of the hyperbole that pervades most of his theoretical writings. Evidence supports the latter interpretation.

The Russian populist Vladimir Karpovich Debagory-Mokrievich, visiting Bakunin in Locarno at the beginning of 1874, was told that the Italian anarchists were planning an armed uprising. Debagory-Mokrievich later recalled that Bakunin did not expect a full-scale revolution to ensue, explain-

² *Archives Bakounine*, 3:206.

³ *Ibid.*, 226.

ing that he conceived the insurrection in terms of the tactic known later as “propaganda of the deed”:

We must make unceasing revolutionary attempts, even if we are beaten and completely routed, one, two, ten times, even twenty times; but, if on the twenty-first time, the people support us by taking part in our revolution, we shall have been paid for all the sacrifices we will have endured.⁴

Whether Bakunin’s Italian disciples conceived their enterprise as the spark that would ignite the social revolution, or as the first of many insurrectionary deeds of propaganda, is difficult to establish. Malatesta, writing more than a half-century later, acknowledged that the Italian anarchists of the early internationalist period were naively optimistic about the prospects for social revolution. Still embracing a mystical faith in the revolutionary spontaneity and libertarian instincts of the masses,

we put our hopes in general discontent, and because the misery that afflicted the masses was so insufferable, we believed it was enough to give an example, launching with arms in hand the cry of “down with the masters,” in order for the working masses to fling themselves against the bourgeoisie and take possession of the land, the factories, and all that they produced with their toil and that had been stolen from them.⁵

Other evidence suggests that, however grandiose their original expectations, the anarchists in 1874 responded ultimately to two powerful and related imperatives: the fear of losing rank-and-file support, and the need to compete with the Mazzinians and Garibaldians. Many of the Federation’s rank and file seriously believed that revolution was forthcoming. As one militant wrote in May 1874, “a spark can light the fuse, and the disinherited, foreseeing the imminent cataclysm, with ears attentive, nostrils dilated, and breathless with anxiety, are sharpening their daggers for the vespers of the privileged classes.”⁶

Having acquired most of its rank and file from the democrats, the International could easily have lost it back to them if the anarchists failed to demonstrate themselves worthy successors to the revolutionary traditions of the Risorgimento, especially after the inspiring examples of the Paris Commune and the Spanish rebellion of 1873. Malatesta, reporting to the Bern congress in 1876, acknowledged the ongoing competition between internationalists and radical democrats, explaining that his comrades had

⁴ “Souvenirs,” in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 85. It is curious that Aldo Romano (*Storia*, 3:277) quotes this passage (without indicating its date) in his discussion of the 1877 insurrection, an avowed example of “propaganda of the deed,” but ignores its significance for the 1874 uprising.

⁵ Preface to Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, xxvii.

⁶ Letter (author not indicated) to Tucci, quoted in A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:147.

had no choice but to rebel in sympathy with the popular upheavals of 1873–1874 lest they lose the support of the “practicing partisans of the revolution.”⁷ Costa, in his prison diary of 1898, underscored the internationalist-democratic rivalry as well as the propagandistic objective of the 1874 uprising:

Violent action . . . was considered a necessity. Having no other means at hand that corresponded with the Garibaldian and Mazzinian revolutionary Italian traditions of the people, recently emerged from the revolutionary period, we needed an affirmation—propaganda of the deed—to pose the problem.⁸

Two years later, in his published memoirs, Costa put the matter into still sharper focus: the popular unrest of 1873–1874 convinced the anarchists that “the occasion had come if not to provoke the social revolution in Italy, at least to give a practical example that would demonstrate to the people what we wanted and to propagate our ideas with evidence of deeds.”⁹

PREPARATIONS FOR INSURRECTION

Costa and Cafiero wanted to carry out an insurrection in the spring of 1874; to prepare for it they organized the Comitato Italiano per la Rivoluzione Sociale (CIRS) in December 1873. A reincarnation of the Italian branch of Bakunin’s Revolutionary Socialist Alliance, the CIRS represented the younger generation of Italian anarchists that emerged after the Paris Commune.¹⁰ In January 1874, the CIRS secretly distributed *Bollettino N. 1*, written by Costa with Bakunin’s approval, declaring that “peaceful propaganda of revolutionary ideas has had its day and must be replaced by the clamorous and solemn propaganda of insurrection and barricades.”¹¹

The authorities had known about the CIRS almost from its inception but grew alarmed after *Bollettino 1*, fearing above all the emergence of a revolutionary alliance between the internationalists and the republicans. Efforts to suppress the International intensified, with arrests in Florence, Pontassieve,

⁷ Report of October 26, 1876, in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:439.

⁸ “Annotazioni autobiografiche,” 322.

⁹ Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 18.

¹⁰ Important members of the CIRS included Francesco Pezzi, Gaetano Grassi, Francesco Natta, and Oreste Lovari in Florence; Oreste Falleri and Faustino Sighieri in Pisa; Alceste Faggioli and Lodovico Guardigli in Bologna; Lodovico Nabruzzi, Gaetano Zirardini, and his brothers Claudio, Giovanni, Edoardo, and Antonio in Ravenna; Eugenio Paganelli in Naples; Marino Mazzetti in Macerata; Cesare Bert in Turin; Vincenzo Matteuzzi in Ancona; Saverio Guardino, Carmelo Spada, and Calogero Portulano in Sicily. Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 82–83, 125; Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, 3:169; Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:662n. 484; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 172–173.

¹¹ Reproduced in A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:479–481. The three subsequent bulletins can also be found at 3:481–495.

Perugia, and Ancona, and wider restrictions on personal movement throughout the Romagna. Although new sections continued to be organized during that winter and spring, public activity became nearly impossible, and anarchist leaders kept moving from place to place, operating secretly to transform the Federation into a clandestine organization that would answer a call to arms. It never dawned on the authorities that by driving the Federation underground and stifling alternative methods of propaganda, they were reinforcing the anarchists' determination to use violence.¹²

Plans organizing insurrectionary bands were formulated by Bakunin, Costa, Natta, and three veterans of the Paris Commune (Cyrille, Pindy, and Verry) at a meeting in Lugano in mid-February 1874. A few weeks later the conspirators received their first setback. After publishing *Bollettino N. 1*, the Italian Federation had informed the Anti-Authoritarian International's headquarters in Brussels of its intentions and requested financial support for the insurrection. But the central commission, which had urged the Italians to prepare for a general strike, was unenthusiastic about insurrectionary tactics and notified them that no support could be provided without more information. On March 18, the anniversary of the Paris Commune, a special conference of the national federations convened in Lugano to discuss the project. Despite pleas from Cafiero and Grassi, the non-Italian representatives refused support on the grounds that "the socialist spirit in Italy was still neither extensive nor understood."¹³

The International's refusal of support caused the CIRS to forego an immediate call to arms, a decision that disappointed and disillusioned many of the Federation's members after their hopes for action had been aroused. The CIRS decided, meanwhile, to fine-tune the conspiracy and make arrangements for simultaneous uprisings in the Romagna, the Marches, Tuscany, Rome, southern Italy, and Sicily in August. Although he conferred several times with Bakunin, whose advice is unknown, Costa assumed command of the insurrectionary movement between March and July, coordinating activities in central Italy, while entrusting the Mezzogiorno to Malatesta, back in action after his release from prison in January.¹⁴

¹² Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 173–174; Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 249; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), January 4, 18, March 15, 22, 1874; Malatesta's report to the Bern congress of 1876, in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:440; Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 18.

¹³ Costa's report of April 16, 1874, to the Correspondence Commission in Florence, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 174. Also, Florence police chief's reports of January 21, 29, February 11, 22, 23, 27, March 18, *ibid.*, 173–174.

¹⁴ The Florence police chief's report of June 25, 1874, *ibid.*; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:169, 205; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 102; Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 41; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 194; Gonzales, *Costa*, 89–90; Della Peruta, "L'Internazionale a Roma dal 1872 al 1877," *Movimento Operaio* 4, no. 1 (January-February 1952): 24–28.

Malatesta's task was formidable. He was expected to recruit insurrectionists in areas where the Federation was numerically weak, ideologically immature, and isolated from the peasant masses. During April and May, Malatesta visited Bari, Foggia, and Molfetta in Puglia, and Catanzaro in Calabria. He found nothing resembling a communications network, much less a revolutionary apparatus. Neither Molfetta nor Taranto, the two cities he selected for his base of operations, had an IWA section. His contacts were limited to a handful of internationalists—mostly railroad workers—in Molfetta, Bari, and Taranto. Ultimately, Malatesta succeeded in organizing an insurrection in Puglia despite the meager resources at his disposal. In Calabria, where lingering memories of an abortive insurrection led by Ricciotti Garibaldi in 1870 had aroused Malatesta's hopes for support, the situation was worse. Save for a single internationalist in Catanzaro, most of the Calabrians Malatesta tried to recruit were republicans; one of them, Carlo Dotto De' Dauli, was an important figure in the party hierarchy. Not surprisingly, support in Calabria never went beyond preliminary discussions. As for Sicily, a legend propagated by the internationalist Carlo Monticelli depicts Malatesta trying to recruit brigands, whose chief refuses help on the grounds that his men are too religious and honest to participate in an enterprise that might follow the example of the Paris Commune and shoot the archbishop. In reality, Malatesta never visited Sicily, where he had only one member of the CIRS as a direct contact. Hopes for a Sicilian insurgency could not be realized.¹⁵

Malatesta's secret dealings in Calabria underscored the important question of whether the anarchists would seek a tactical alliance with the republicans. Support for it existed among several Federation leaders—notably Francesco Pezzi and Celso Ceretti—and some of the anarchist rank and file, particularly in the Romagna. Between January and March, Ceretti tried to secure the collaboration of Garibaldi and several Mazzinian leaders in the Romagna. But his hopes for an alliance were dashed by Costa, probably with Bakunin's approval. Although he would have accepted the republican rank and file, which he considered revolutionary, Costa vehemently opposed an alliance with the leaders of Italian democracy, Garibaldian or Mazzinian. In the CIRS's *Bollettino* N. 2, written in March 1874, Costa expressed an uncompromising Bakuninist position on clericalism, parliamentarism, Mazzinian republicanism, and Garibaldian socialism, the last receiving the sharpest criticism.¹⁶

With Garibaldi estranged, the anarchists' monopoly on the insurrection-

¹⁵ Giulio Trevisani, "Il processo di Trani contro gli internazionalisti," *Movimento Operaio* 8, no. 5 (September-October 1956): 639–660; Monticelli, *Costa e l'Internazionale*, 13; Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 250–254. Armando Borghi accepts Monticelli's tale because Malatesta never denied it and because the idea of recruiting brigands was espoused by many revolutionaries during this period. See his *Malatesta*, 48.

¹⁶ *Bollettino* N. 2, in A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:481–492.

ary movement was assured, because an alliance with republican leaders had never really been an option. Mazzinian party chieftains Aurelio Saffi and Maurizio Quadrio were no longer interested in revolution, much less the "social liquidation" they feared almost as much as did the monarchists. Still, the desire for a temporary alliance to overthrow the Savoy monarchy persisted among lesser-known Mazzinians, as well as among the republican rank and file. To squelch this tendency, a secret meeting of party leaders was scheduled to convene at the Villa Ruffi, just outside of Rimini, on August 2—a meeting that was to have a dramatic impact on the revolutionary plans of the anarchists.¹⁷

While Mazzinian chieftains conspired to deprive them of republican support, Costa, Malatesta, and their most trusted comrades continued to lay the groundwork for an insurrection. Costa went to Venice on July 3 to meet with Emilio Castellani, his principal associate in the Veneto. A few days later he crossed the Swiss border to confer with Bakunin. By mid-July, he had journeyed to Aquila and Pescara in the Abruzzi, and from there to Naples to deliver money and instructions to Malatesta. The latter, after a quick visit with Bakunin, spent the rest of July trying to rally more support and arranging for the transportation of rifles from Naples to Puglia, the starting point of the southern uprising. Costa, meanwhile, journeyed to Arezzo and Pontassieve in Tuscany, and then went on to Rome and Milan, where he met the Ukrainian revolutionary Mikhail Sazhin, one of Bakunin's friends who had come from Lugano with funds furnished by Cafiero to buy arms. Costa returned toward the end of July to Bologna, the nerve center of the entire operation. Bakunin joined him there on July 30.¹⁸

THE BARONATA

The man to whom the Italian anarchists looked for inspiration was now a mere husk of the fiery revolutionary whom Wagner had once likened to Siegfried. In his *Mémoire justificatif*, written a day after he left Lugano for Bologna, Bakunin confessed that he was "really tired and disillusioned." The failures of the Paris Commune and the cantonalist insurrection in Spain had delivered "a terrible blow to all our hopes and expectations." Bakunin's faith in the revolutionary potential of the masses was waning: "We have calculated without the masses, who have not wanted to interest themselves in their own emancipation, and for want of that popular passion, in spite of being theoretically correct, we were powerless."¹⁹ According to Guillaume,

¹⁷ See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:204; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 332–336; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 190–194; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:153–154; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 176–178; and especially Gonzales, *Costa*, 92–95.

¹⁸ Gonzales, *Costa*, 90–91; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:205.

¹⁹ Bakunin, *Mémoire justificatif*, quoted in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:202.

Bakunin had no desire to participate in the Italian insurrection, which no longer had his approval. His thoughts were fixed on the lost dream of spending his last days in comfortable retirement with his family at the Baronata.²⁰

By 1873, Bakunin had grown weary of political life and was increasingly fearful that the Swiss authorities might deport him to Russia. He harbored deep concerns, too, about the welfare of his wife and children. If only he possessed property and income, he could obtain Swiss citizenship and security. Cafiero came to Bakunin's salvation in August 1873, when he gave him eighteen thousand francs to purchase the Baronata, a dilapidated old villa perched on a rocky hill overlooking Lake Verbano. It was to serve as a home for the Russian and his entourage, and as a safehouse for revolutionaries. For almost a year, and with complete abandon, Bakunin spent Cafiero's money on improvements and acquisitions: a grander house, a new road, an artificial lake, a new stable and coach house, as well as various servants to run the place. These expenditures consumed most of the four hundred thousand lire Cafiero had derived from the sale of his property in Barletta, yet the young ascetic, still blinded by filial devotion to Bakunin, did nothing to restrain him.²¹

During his stay at the Baronata, Cafiero had developed a strong, if platonic, attachment to Olympia Kutuzov, a member of Bakunin's entourage. Kutuzov returned to Russia in March 1874 to visit her dying mother, but the Czarist officials denied her a passport to return to Switzerland because of her revolutionary views. Cafiero rescued Kutozov by going to Russia in April and marrying her before the Italian Consul in St. Petersburg, an act which bestowed Italian citizenship and safe passage. Returning to Locarno in July, Cafiero was greeted by Bakunin with news that another fifty thousand francs was needed to sustain the Baronata until it could become self-supporting. Cafiero departed for Barletta to liquidate the last of his patrimony. His return on July 13 coincided with the arrival of Bakunin's family, whose voyage from Siberia had been financed with another six thousand francs from Cafiero. On the train from Vienna to Milan, Antonia Bakunin had been accompanied by Carlo Gambuzzi, the man generally believed to have been her lover and the father of her three children. Gambuzzi told her the rumors that Bakunin had taken advantage of Cafiero, squandering his

²⁰ Ibid., 3:200–201. Bakunin's *Mémoire justificatif* does not discuss the Italian insurrection, not even mentioning the preparations or visits of his Italian disciples. Guillaume does not explain Bakunin's alleged disapproval of the undertaking.

²¹ For the Baronata episode, see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:181–187, 198–200, 202–204, including excerpts from Bakunin's *Mémoire justificatif*; Carr, *Bakunin*, 480–485; Masumi, *Cafiero*, 129–140; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 127–134; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:137–144. Excellent brief accounts are given in Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 316, 331, 336–339, and Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 196–201.

patrimony. Antonia, who believed the Baronata had been financed by Bakunin's own inheritance, asked her husband for an explanation. The old Russian dreaded the prospect of acknowledging his poverty and abuse of Cafiero's generosity. While continuing to withhold the truth from his wife, Bakunin begged Cafiero to dismiss the rumors. After hesitating initially, Cafiero released a torrent of pent-up emotions, telling his mentor that the allegations were true—Bakunin had indeed exploited him, ruining him financially in the process. Acknowledging his own responsibility in committing “a great and unpardonable folly,” Cafiero informed Bakunin that the Baronata thereafter would receive “not a *sou*, not a thought, not a particle of his energy, all of which belonged to the revolution.” Bakunin, deeply hurt by the break with Cafiero and worried about the security of his family (having just signed the deed for the Baronata over to its rightful owner to ease his conscience), wrote a melodramatic farewell in his *Mémoire justificatif*: “And now, dear friends, I have only to die, *adieu*. . . . Antonia, do not curse me. I shall die blessing you and our dear children.”²²

The Baronata affair may only prove that the vagaries of life often take precedence over politics, even among the staunchest revolutionaries. Nonetheless, with due allowance for human frailty, Bakunin and Cafiero had been egregiously remiss in their responsibilities, above all to those comrades in Italy who were about to put their lives on the line. As the spiritual father of Italian anarchism and an original planner of the insurrection, Bakunin certainly owed the enterprise more effort than an occasional consultation with Costa and Malatesta. But his preoccupation with the Baronata was so consuming that by July 1874 the Italian insurrection had become little more than a moral obligation he would have preferred to avoid. Cafiero, if less culpable than Bakunin because of his naiveté and selflessness, bears the onus of having given top priority to Bakunin's material needs and permitting him to squander a fortune that would have far better served the movement. Furthermore, his own absorption with the Baronata deprived the insurrection of indispensable leadership. Although he paid for the weapons, Cafiero contributed little to the impending insurgency by way of planning and organizing. Only after his break with Bakunin did Cafiero become an active participant, much too late to be genuinely effective.

THE INSURRECTION OF AUGUST 1874

Events turned against the anarchists even before they revolted. The Italian authorities, still fearful of a revolutionary alliance among subversives, struck preemptively against the republicans on August 2, arresting twenty-eight

²² Bakunin, *Mémoire justificatif*, in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:199, 204. For Cafiero's relationship with Kutuzov, see Masini, *Cafiero*, 136, 144–149, 152–157.

party leaders who, ironically, had met at the Villa Ruffi for the purpose of forestalling such an alliance. The raid was effective nonetheless. With republican chieftains in jail and the party's rank and file immobilized by uncertainty, the task of preventive repression became that much easier for the government. All internationalist and republican associations in the provinces of Bologna, Forlì, and Ravenna were dissolved a few days after the Villa Ruffi raid. On August 5 police deprived the insurrection of its principal organizer by arresting Costa in Bologna. Other arrests ensued. The remaining anarchist leaders resolved to take action immediately, although knowing they had no chance of success. "Frankly, we recognized it," Costa later acknowledged, "but now it was too late. It was necessary to act—to do something."²³

A specific date for the insurrection had never been set. On August 6–7 Bakunin and his Bolognese comrades therefore improvised a plan calling for the insurrection to begin in Bologna, spread throughout the Romagna, and continue to the Marches and Tuscany. A column of three thousand Romagnole internationalists, with Imola providing the largest contingent, was to rendezvous at Prati di Caprara and join forces with a large column of local insurgents in Bologna. A second column from San Michele in Bosco was to seize the Bologna arsenal and transport its arms and ammunition to the church of Santa Annunziata, converting the house of worship into a "pyrotechnical establishment" for the occasion. Local internationalists, meanwhile, were expected to erect barricades at strategic points throughout the city. Around one hundred republicans, acting without party endorsement, agreed to join them at the eleventh hour.²⁴

On the morning of August 7, 1874, cities throughout the Romagna, Tuscany, the Marches, Lazio, Puglia, the Campania, and Sicily awoke to find the CIRA's third revolutionary bulletin affixed to their walls. Written by Cafiero, the document saluted the "dawn of our redemption" and called upon workers, peasants, and soldiers to revolt against their masters.²⁵ But the Italian masses remained deaf to the call, and the internationalists were obliged to act alone.

Nothing went according to plan. On the night of August 7–8, instead of the several thousand expected, only about 150 volunteers, the majority unarmed, materialized in Imola. Led by Costa's friend Antonio Cornacchia, the Imolesi proceeded along the railroad tracks toward Bologna until they reached the station at Castel San Pietro, where they wrecked the telegraphic signal equipment. After marching a few more miles, they met

²³ "Annotazioni autobiografiche," 322, and his *Bagliori di socialismo*, 19. Also A. Romano, *Storia*, 3: 154–155; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:204–205; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 340; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 203; Gonzales, *Costa*, 96.

²⁴ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:205.

²⁵ A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:492–493.

Abdon Negrì and Alessandro Calanchi, two leaders of the Bologna insurrection, who urged the Imolesi to disband because the revolt had fizzled. Many dispersed on the spot, but the rest were soon surrounded at nearby La Campana by a large contingent of carabinieri and police. Forty-three insurgents, including Negrì and Calanchi, were arrested; others who managed to escape were later apprehended. Meanwhile, the four hundred internationalists gathered at Prati di Caprara, and the column assembled at San Michele in Bosco, each having waited in vain for the arrival of additional forces, disbanded. The leaders of the Prati group, Serafino Mazzotti and Alfonso Leonesi, led a band of about twenty men into the hills to hide the weapons and ammunition for later use. Local peasants betrayed them to the authorities and only a handful escaped.²⁶

As neither gunfire nor cries of revolt had disturbed the night, Bakunin assumed the worst as he remained hidden in his room awaiting news. He contemplated using his revolver on himself but desisted. At 3:40 A.M., Silvio Fruggieri arrived to confirm that the Bologna uprising had failed, but he convinced Bakunin that the insurrections scheduled to erupt elsewhere might still succeed. With police everywhere, Bakunin remained in hiding for several more days until Fruggieri and Natta obtained clothing in which to disguise him and a train ticket for Switzerland. On August 14 a beardless Bakunin emerged from his hiding place dressed as a country priest, with dark glasses, a cane in one hand, and a basket of eggs in the other. Legend has it that because of his enormous bulk, Bakunin became wedged in the door of a coach while en route to the railroad station. Only the frenzied pushing and pulling of his companions succeeded in extricating him. Once on board the train he reached Switzerland undetected.²⁷

News of the fiasco in Bologna undermined the morale of the Florentine internationalists who had scheduled their revolt for August 15. But rather than abandon the enterprise, the revolutionary committee—Natta, Grassi, and Lovari—decided that the Tuscans might succeed where the Romagnoles had failed. Advancing the date to August 8, they called for the internationalists of Pontassieve, eighteen kilometers east of Florence, to overwhelm the local authorities, rouse the peasants and workers, and then march on Florence to reinforce local militants in their attack on government buildings and communication centers. The authorities, however, had learned the details of the plot from their spies and dispatched troops to Pontassieve to prevent the uprising. The prefect of Florence dissolved thirty-two internationalist and republican societies, while police arrested about a hundred suspects. The leaders of the revolutionary committee

²⁶ For the Bologna insurrection, see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:205–206; Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 19–20; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 106–107; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 204–205; Gonzales, *Costa*, 96–97.

²⁷ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:206; Carr, *Bakunin*, 487–488.

cluded capture and improvised as best they could. Natta went to the Romagna to ascertain if a joint Tuscan-Romagnole venture could still be attempted. Discouraged by his findings, Natta sent word to Grassi and Lovari that Florence and its satellite towns should start the insurrection on their own. But the presence of troops and carabinieri at strategic locations throughout Florence frustrated their efforts, and within a few days, Natta, Lovari, and other militants were arrested. Only Grassi escaped to take refuge at the Baronata.²⁸

The insurrectionary movement met similar failures elsewhere. Police foiled a scheme hatched by Grassi for insurgents in Livorno to seize government buildings and march inland to help their Pisan comrades. Plans to organize armed bands in Ancona, Iesi, Fabriano, and other towns in the Marches were also stifled. In Rome, where Costa had personally organized an insurrectionary committee, all the local leaders were arrested on August 9. In Sicily, the internationalists did nothing save issue a flood of insurrectionary manifestos before the authorities conducted mass arrests.²⁹

Only Malatesta, undaunted by hopeless odds, successfully launched a small-scale insurrection in Puglia. He had five cases of rifles shipped by train from Naples to Taranto on July 30. Whether his plan called for a coup de main to seize Taranto, as Max Nettlau insists, is uncertain.³⁰ In any case, when only three comrades showed up instead of the three hundred to five hundred expected, the weapons were sent to the village of Castel del Monte. There they were hidden in the ruins of an old castle that had been used as a meeting place by secret societies more than a half-century earlier. Of the several hundred conspirators who had promised to participate, only five assembled to meet Malatesta at the Castel del Monte on the night of August 11–12, each sporting the anarchists' red and black cockade. Malatesta reacted to the predicament with characteristic aplomb, distributing the old muzzle loaders and declaring war on the Italian Army. For several days the tiny band visited nearby villages, trying to convert the peasants to their cause. Discouraged by their failure to provoke a Jacquerie, Malatesta and his comrades disbanded at the approach of a large force of carabinieri. Mala-

²⁸ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 178–183; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 107–108; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 342; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 206–207.

²⁹ Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 108; Della Peruta, "L'Internazionale a Roma," 26–28; Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 256–259.

³⁰ Nettlau, who discussed the 1874 insurrection with Malatesta in 1893 and 1900, insists that the internationalists had intended to seize Taranto but changed their plans because of the poor showing (*Malatesta*, 80–83). Fabbri, who also discussed the episode with Malatesta, makes no such claim in his biography, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 67. Giulio Trevisani, a modern historian who has utilized archival sources relating to the 1875 trial of Malatesta and his fellow conspirators, maintains that there is no evidence to substantiate Nettlau's claim. See his "Il processo di Trani," 640–646.

testa escaped the danger zone in a hay wagon driven by a friendly peasant and remained hidden in Naples for several days before departing for Switzerland. He got as far as Pesaro before he was arrested on August 18, his escape route probably having been betrayed to the police. Before his incarceration under "prevention detention" at Trani prison, Malatesta told his interrogators that he knew nothing of the events in Puglia: "I am completely extraneous to politics and was going to Milan to buy books."³¹

The insurrections of 1874 have generally been regarded as proof that Bakunin's revolutionary theories were invalid. Doubtless some of the assumptions customarily attributed to Bakunin—the growing revolutionary consciousness of the Italian masses and the strength of the International—were proved incorrect. But any critique of Bakunin's theory must take into account the fact that the insurrections had not been conducted in conformity with his teachings. For all his alleged reliance on the revolutionary "instincts" and "spontaneity" of the masses, Bakunin had always been cautious to emphasize practical considerations, such as the need for organization and preparedness. In 1871, for example, during his campaign to recruit dissident democrats, Bakunin had insisted that a rising of the urban proletariat might result in a political revolution, such as Mazzini had desired, but could never generate a "universal popular revolution," the objective of the anarchists. What the anarchists had to organize to conduct a true social revolution, Bakunin had insisted, was "the simultaneous revolution of the people in the countryside and of the cities," for "without preparatory organization [even] the most numerous and most powerful elements are impotent and nothing."³²

The Italian Federation had attracted a fair-sized following during the two years since its founding, all the more impressive considering the government's constant interference with its propaganda and organizing activities. Nevertheless, by 1874 the Federation had scarcely begun to organize an underground network capable of direct action, much less forge a revolutionary alliance between the urban working classes and the peasant masses. The Romagnole insurrection was essentially an urban uprising of militant artisans and workers, poorly organized and prematurely launched, that lacked any organic connection with peasant unrest in the countryside. The same was true the uprisings aborted or quickly suppressed in Tuscany, the Marches, and Rome. Only Malatesta's action in Puglia attempted to involve the peasants. Therefore—in terms of execution, if not intent—the insurrections of 1874 were more similar to the Mazzinian uprisings of the

³¹ From the Trani trial proceedings, quoted in Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 51. For details of the Puglia rising, see Lucarelli, 45–51; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 82–83; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 108–109; Trevisani, "Il processo di Trani," 643–645.

³² Bakunin, "Ai miei amici d'Italia in occasione del congresso operaio convocato a Roma il 1^o novembre 1871 dal partito Mazziniano," in *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 42.

Risorgimento than to the anarchist insurgencies originally theorized by Bakunin, even the limited enterprises he would have considered propaganda of the deed. The anarchists in 1874 had no chance of attaining their insurrectionary goals—whether catalyst for social revolution or vehicle for propaganda—because of internal weakness, the indifference of the masses, and the power of the state.

UNDERGROUND AND ON TRIAL

A new wave of repression commenced with the capture of the insurrectionists. All sections of the Italian Federation were dissolved by the Ministry of the Interior. Scores of internationalists were placed under *ammonizione* (admonishment) merely for their membership in the Federation and then sent to *domicilio coatto* (forced residence on penal islands) for violating the harsh restrictions on personal movement that admonishment prescribed.³³ Hundreds of other suspects were arrested, detained for long periods, and harassed in their homes and work places. Thousands of additional troops and carabinieri were assigned to augment existing forces in traditional trouble spots, such as Sicily and the Romagna, lest workers and peasants entertain thoughts of rebellion.³⁴

With public activity and formal association unsustainable in the face of government repression, the Italian Federation attempted to go further underground, to transform itself into a secret organization directed by a "commission of reliable men" whose task was to maintain relations between the various clandestine groups.³⁵ The commission consisted of those members of the CIRS who now gathered around Cafiero in Locarno or who were safely in hiding in Italy. However, with so many leaders in jail or exile, and with the rank and file demoralized, the scope and effectiveness of clandestine activity were very limited during the next two years. A scheme devised by Cafiero to organize armed bands in the spring of 1875 came to nothing.³⁶

The anarchist movement remained semiparalyzed until it received a boost from the mass trials the government conducted in 1875–1876 for the purpose of destroying the International. Police efforts to gather or manufacture evidence were frequently so inept that prosecutors could not bring suspected conspirators to trial. Thus most of the internationalists arrested in Ancona, Macerata, and Pesaro were released in February 1875, and indict-

³³ *Ammonizione* and *domicilio coatto* are discussed in Chapter 6.

³⁴ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), October 25, 1874; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 109–110.

³⁵ Malatesta's report to the Bern congress in 1876, in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:440.

³⁶ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 91; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:172–173; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 210–211, 300–301n. 4.

ments against dozens more awaiting trial in Rome, Trani, Florence, Bologna, and other cities were eventually dropped. Nonetheless, the government resolved to proceed with mass trials, despite the paucity of evidence, because relinquishing its campaign against the International might have resulted in loss of prestige and public confidence.³⁷

The Rome trial of May 1875 suggested that credible evidence might not be required for conviction after all. Of the twenty-seven originally indicted, ten internationalists stood accused of affixing seditious placards to the walls of buildings one night in January 1874, and for constituting a criminal association whose purpose was incitement to overthrow the government. The accused, nearly all of them workers active in the local movement, heard themselves described by the prosecutor as “men in rags” (*straccioni*) who belonged to the “social mire” (*melma sociale*). Although it was revealed that the police had beaten the defendants in an unsuccessful effort to extract confessions, and that witnesses for the prosecution were all police agents and informers, the middle-class jurors did not balk at performing the duty expected of them by the state. When the prosecutor invited them to share “the glory of destroying the International in our country,”³⁸ they returned a guilty verdict against nine of the ten workers. Eight were sentenced to ten years imprisonment, one to seven years, and the last to three months already served awaiting trial. Severe even by Italian standards, the sentences elicited public sympathy for the condemned.³⁹

The government’s success in Rome was followed by a major setback in Florence. Headquarters of the correspondence commission since the fall of 1873, Florence had been the focal point of the Federations’ insurrectionary conspiracy in Tuscany. However, as the authorities’ quick response to events in the Romagna had prevented the internationalists in Florence and nearby Pontassieve from taking action, the only evidence of an attempted uprising consisted of allegations furnished by police informers. Aware of the weak case against the defendants, the minister of justice and the minister of the interior were determined nevertheless to press on, so the Florence police chief encouraged subordinates in the chain of command to “find proof.”⁴⁰

Of the seventy individuals originally indicted, thirty-four eventually stood trial from June 30 to August 31. Thirty-one of the accused were internationalists, all of them artisans and workers save for three agricultural

³⁷ Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, 3:259; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 348; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 184.

³⁸ Quoted by the Italian correspondent for the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), May 23, 1875.

³⁹ Ibid.; Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, 3:259; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:174–175; Della Peruta, “L’Internazionale a Roma,” 26–28.

⁴⁰ Florence police chief to delegate of public security in Pontassieve, November 28, 1874, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 185.

laborers. The best known of the Florentine internationalists, including several members of the correspondence commission, were the tailor Gaetano Grassi (in absentia, having escaped to Switzerland), the mechanic Francesco Natta, the shoemaker Oreste Lovari, the cabinetmaker Aurelio Vannini, and the carpenter Cesare Batacchi. The remaining defendants included two prominent republicans—the lawyer Salvatore Battaglia and the journalist Ettore Socci—and a staunch monarchist, the Marquis Michele Grifoni. The latter, a former artillery officer and aide-de-camp to the king, was being persecuted for refusing to cede some property to the investigating magistrate. Battaglia and Socci had been arrested as part of the government's scheme to implicate important republicans in the insurrections and discredit their party.⁴¹

The strategy backfired. Angered by the Villa Ruffi arrests and the dissolution of many of their associations, the republicans resolved to use the Florence trial as a forum to combat the government's harassment campaign. Differences with the internationalists were put aside temporarily while republican attorneys mounted a defense on behalf of all the accused. What they revealed in court were the standard tactics employed by Italian police when dealing with working-class subversives. Many of the internationalists had been beaten into signing confessions. Common criminals were placed in their cells with instructions to overhear and report their conversations. Police agents posing as attorneys offered them their "services." The defense attorneys further weakened the government's case by presenting some of the most renowned leaders of the radical left as character witnesses—Aurelio Saffi, Mauro Macchi, Luigi Castellazzo, Lorenzo Piccioli-Poggiali, Andrea Giannelli, Maurizio Quadrio, Menotti Garibaldi, and Federico Campanella. Even Giuseppe Garibaldi submitted a deposition, declaring solidarity with the defendants and explaining his own brand of internationalism.⁴²

The Florentine jurors could not ignore the perceptible shift in public sympathy in favor of the defendants. Nor were they indifferent to the sensational news that the Court of Cassation in Rome had ordered a new trial of the Roman internationalists and that the proceedings in Trani had ended in acquittal for Malatesta and his comrades. But the most powerful appeal to the conscience of the jurors came from the defendants themselves, especially Natta. The thirty-year-old mechanic cut a dignified figure as he calmly expounded upon the poverty and injustices borne by the masses and explained that the International was not a conspiracy against the state but an association of workers that "represents the heart-rending voice of thou-

⁴¹ Ibid., 183–184; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:176–177; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), July 25, 1875.

⁴² Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 184–186; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:177–178; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 111–112.

sands of honest workers who, lacking work or poorly paid, arise to protest against those who are the cause of it.”⁴³ Maintaining that the disorders of 1874 had been caused by unemployment and the high cost of living, Natta ended his speech with a stirring appeal. The courtroom erupted into applause when the jury announced its decision absolving all but three of the defendants.⁴⁴

In Puglia, meanwhile, Malatesta and fourteen associates had been tried before the Court of Assizes in Trani on charges of conspiracy and armed rebellion. The trial was a cause célèbre for this provincial city. Troops were deployed to prevent demonstrations, but the mood of the local population was more festive than rebellious, as citizens of every class avidly followed the proceedings. The prosecutor tried to frighten the jury—composed of the richest property owners in the province—with lurid descriptions of what would result from an acquittal: “If you do not condemn these men, they will come one day to take your women, violate your daughters, steal your property, destroy the fruit of your perspiration, and you will be left ruined and poor, with dishonor on your brow.”⁴⁵ Unswayed, the jurors acquitted the internationalists on August 5, 1875, congratulated them, and mixed with the awaiting crowd that gave the young rebels an ovation as they left the courtroom free men.⁴⁶

THE MOVEMENT ON HOLD

An internationalist, writing after Malatesta’s acquittal, was so pleased with the publicity and sympathy generated by trials at Rome, Florence, Trani, and elsewhere that he exclaimed: “Oh, if only the government would multiply these trials! They would cost some of us a few years in prison, but they would immensely benefit our cause.”⁴⁷ To be sure, the courtroom had

⁴³ Lorenzo Cenni, ed., *Le celebri autodifese (stenografate) pronunziate da un meccanico e da un contadino: Francesco Natta e Giuseppe Scarlatti (Corte d’Assise di Firenze)* (Florence, 1909), 9. The speech is also given in Stefano Merli, ed., *Autodifese di militanti operai e democratici italiani davanti ai Tribunali*, (Milan and Rome, 1958), 13–21.

⁴⁴ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 187; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:177–179. The second trial of Roman internationalists ended in acquittal in May 1876. Two Florentine defendants were sentenced to time already served while awaiting trial: one for possessing, the other for manufacturing, arms; the third was condemned to nine years imprisonment for violent theft. On April 11, 1876, Grassi was sentenced in absentia to eleven years at hard labor for contempt of court, but the political amnesty of October 1876 enabled him to return to Florence.

⁴⁵ Minutes from the Trani trial were published in *La Plebe* (Lodi), August 26, 1875, by an anonymous observer, often misidentified as Cafiero, and translated subsequently in the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), September 5, 1875.

⁴⁶ Trevisani, “Il processo di Trani,” 639–640, 660; Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 51–52; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:180.

⁴⁷ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), September 5, 1875.

become an important forum for propaganda and would continue to be regarded as such by anarchist defendants for decades to come.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the movement was seriously hurting from the recent wave of government repression. Many workers, who had joined the International with hopes for immediate emancipation, were disillusioned by the failure of the insurrections and feared that further collaboration would embroil them with the police and jeopardize their employment. Local leaders, meanwhile, could do little to buttress flagging spirits. Any show of militancy would not only threaten their own safety but adversely influence the proceedings against Costa and the Romagnoles. Not even the exiled chieftains of the CIRS—Malatesta, Cafiero, Grassi, Mazzotti, and Emilio Borghetti—dared continue their clandestine preparations for direct action. For nearly a year, therefore, the movement remained dormant, with serious activity placed on hold.

This hiatus enabled Malatesta to embark upon several of the most dangerous adventures of his sixty-year career. After his acquittal he went to Switzerland and facilitated a reconciliation between Cafiero and Bakunin. But even the company of dear friends could not alleviate Malatesta's need for action in the wake of the failed insurrections. That September he went to Spain, where a daring anarchist could always find exciting challenges. Visiting Barcelona, Madrid, and Cádiz, Malatesta met with leaders of the Spanish International—now proscribed and underground—including his friend and fellow Alliance member, Thomás González Morago. At the behest of comrades in Cádiz, Malatesta arranged a jailbreak to liberate Charles Alerini, the Corsican anarchist who had belonged to Bakunin's inner circle in the early 1870s. But Malatesta's plan came to nothing because Alerini refused to leave the prison for personal reasons.⁴⁹

Returning to Naples that October, Malatesta found himself courted by local Freemasons, who wanted the famous young rebel to join their lodge. Malatesta even then believed that Masonry "only served the interests of the most cunning brothers," but self-consciously retracing the footsteps of Bakunin, he joined the society in order to propagandize among the younger

⁴⁸ Referencing his 1875 trial in Trani, Malatesta declared before the Milan Court of Assizes on July 29, 1921, that "the defendants' dock has always been the most effective and glorious of our [propaganda] platforms." See "La dichiarazione finale di Errico Malatesta," in Trento Tagliaferri, ed., *Errico Malatesta, Armando Borghi e compagni davanti ai giurati di Milano. Resoconto stenografico del processo svoltosi il 27, 28 e 29 luglio 1921* (Milan, [1921]), 229.

⁴⁹ Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:280; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 89–90; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 69–71. The Italian edition of Nettlau's biography (*Errico Malatesta. Vita e pensieri*, 132) suggests that these events took place during the winter of 1876–1877. The Spanish edition gives September 1875 as the date of Malatesta's Spanish sojourn, as does Fabbri. In another biographical essay, Nettlau places these events in the autumn of 1875, see his "Sidelights on Malatesta," 5.

men who seemed receptive to socialist ideas, much to the "great scandal and rage of the majority."⁵⁰ He quit the Freemasons, however, when the Naples lodge organized a reception honoring Baron Giovanni Nicotera, who became interior minister in March 1876. Malatesta remained a harsh critic of Masonry for the rest of his life.⁵¹

Cafiero, in contrast, had been relatively inactive for most of 1875, trying unsuccessfully to operate the Baronata as a farm. Finally, he decided leave Switzerland and resume his revolutionary activities in Italy. Cafiero bade the ailing Bakunin farewell in a letter of October 10, 1875: "I embrace you Michael, I embrace you very strongly, I embrace you again."⁵² It was to be their last communication. Together with his wife Kutuzov, Cafiero went to Milan, where they separated almost immediately, she to pursue revolutionary activities in Russia. Alone and with little money, Cafiero was obliged to take work in a factory that specialized in porcelain photographs for grave-stones. He still found time to serve on the editorial staff of Enrico Bignami's *La Plebe*, the evolutionary socialist newspaper now published as a daily. Although Bignami and Cafiero stood far apart on matters of ideology and tactics, the two shared an intellectual and moral affinity. Cafiero's collaboration ended, however, when he left Milan in January 1876. He visited Costa in prison in Bologna, conferred with comrades in Florence, and went to Rome, where he remained for six months working with Malatesta and others to reconstitute the Roman section of the Italian Federation under the innocuous name *Circolo Operaio*.⁵³

On March 18, 1876, the fifth anniversary of the Paris Commune and the day the Historical Left assumed political power in Italy, Cafiero and Malatesta met secretly with other comrades in Rome to discuss plans for reconstituting the Italian Federation as a public organization. Resumption of public activity was deemed necessary to check the ambitions of the evolutionary socialists, who had attacked insurrectionary tactics after the failures of 1874 and were now seeking to fill the vacuum the Italian Federation had left during its experiment with underground activity. Whether this goal was feasible would depend on the policies of the new government. Prime Minister Agostino Depretis had campaigned on a promise of unrestricted constitutional liberty. The democratic left was hopeful about the prospects for greater toleration, but the anarchists remained suspicious of any bourgeois government, whether the Right or Left. They decided, moreover, not to

⁵⁰ Malatesta, "Anche Questa! A proposito di Massoneria," *Umanità Nova* (Milan), October 7, 1920, in *Scritti*, 1:183–184.

⁵¹ Ibid. See also Malatesta's recollection of his Masonic experience in *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), May 11 and 18, 1884.

⁵² Quoted in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:301–302; Masini, *Cafiero*, 149.

⁵³ Masini, *Cafiero*, 149, 167–169; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 91–92; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:302, 4:1; Della Peruta, "L'Internazionale a Roma," 30.

test government's policy until after Costa and the Romagnoles were tried.⁵⁴

Malatesta left Rome after the March 18 meeting to head for the Balkans. Revolt against the Turks had broken out in Herzegovina in September 1874. A year later a number of Italian Garibaldians and internationalists, including Celso Ceretti, had joined the struggle together with several Slavic revolutionaries, such as Sazhin and Sergei Kravchinsky, the Russian nihilist. The internationalists had volunteered in the hope that the rebellion would take a socialist direction, but after a few months they returned disillusioned. Sazhin reported that the Herzegovinian rebellion was driven by two motives: "religious fanaticism and the love of pillage."⁵⁵

Bakunin, meanwhile, had learned of Malatesta's desire to join the Balkan struggle and advised him to fight for his own people. Motivated by a sense of rivalry with the Garibaldians or the desire to participate in a serious revolutionary enterprise, Malatesta could not be dissuaded. He declared to Bakunin that wherever Carthage was fought, Rome was defended. But he never saw action against the Turks. The Austro-Hungarian authorities apprehended Malatesta twice and held him prisoner for more than a month before delivering him to the Italians, half-naked and half-starved.⁵⁶

Before returning home to Naples, Malatesta stopped in Florence to confer with the correspondence commission, which had resumed its work as the Bologna trial got under way. He then joined Cafiero and Borghetti in Rome to reconstitute the Italian Federation and to lead the agitation conducted by unemployed construction workers in the capital. The new government of the Left, just as repressive as the Right, squelched these efforts in short order. Borghetti was arrested on May 30 for violating *ammonizione* and was sentenced to three months imprisonment. That same day, Cafiero, also under *ammonizione*, left for Naples after the government ordered him to get out of Rome. Malatesta was the last of the anarchist leaders expelled from the capital, the police ensuring his departure with an escort back to Naples in mid-June. By now, however, the attention of anarchists and authorities alike shifted to Bologna, where the jury was about to reach a verdict in the trial of Costa and his comrades.⁵⁷

THE BOLOGNA TRIAL

Costa and seventy-eight other internationalists were herded into the prisoners' cage of the Bologna Court of Assizes on March 15, 1876, charged

⁵⁴ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), April 2, 1876; Masini, *Cafiero*, 169–170; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 92.

⁵⁵ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Locle), October 10, 1875. Also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 3:290–291, 300; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 92–93.

⁵⁶ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 92–93; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 71–72.

⁵⁷ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), July 2, 1876; *Il Martello* (Fabriano), July 29, 1876; Della Peruta, "L'Internazionale a Roma," 31.

with conspiracy against the state. Nearly twenty months in preparation, the Bologna proceedings represented the climax of the Historical Right's campaign against the International. The fall of the Right just four days later may not have augured well for the state, but the prosecutors felt confident of conviction. Twenty other internationalists had been released for lack of evidence; an additional nine under indictment had eluded capture. The case against Costa et al., however, seemed solid. Except for Malatesta and his Puglian associates, internationalists elsewhere had been tried for conspiracy against the state even though uprisings never took place. The insurrection centering in and around Bologna, albeit a fiasco, had succeeded at least in getting off the ground. Moreover, the insurgents had been captured red-handed, caches of rifles discovered, and dozens of letters belonging to the correspondence commission, documenting the revolutionary philosophy and insurrectionary objectives of local internationalists, confiscated in Florence.⁵⁸

After Costa, the best known among the internationalists on trial at Bologna were Francesco Pezzi (in absentia), Teobaldo Buggini, Abdon Negri, Alessandro Calanchi, Alceste Faggioli, Temistocle Silvagni, Antonio Cornacchia, Giuseppe Marchesini, and Camillo Penazzi. Although the majority were Romagnoles, several of the accused were from the Marches and the Abruzzi. Their cases had been linked with those of the Romagnoles in order to buttress the prosecution's claim of a national conspiracy. All of the defendants, save Costa, were workers and artisans. They were represented by Giuseppe Barbanti-Brodano, a young socialist recently returned from the Balkans, and sixteen republican attorneys, including the brilliant Giuseppe Ceneri, who was a professor of law at the University of Bologna.⁵⁹

The Bologna Palace of Justice had the appearance of a fortress under siege, as scores of armed soldiers surrounded the building, ready to open fire if necessary. But the trial was never threatened by popular wrath. Each day the courtroom overflowed with local citizens, mostly middle-class, who observed the proceedings much as they would a theater performance, applauding and shouting approval whenever the defense attorneys or the accused scored against the prosecution.⁶⁰ They especially appreciated Professor Ceneri, a master of impassioned rhetoric who sliced the state's case to

⁵⁸ Gonzales, *Costa*, 99. For the confiscated documents, see A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:383–477, and Pier Carlo Masini, ed., *Carte della commissione di corrispondenza dall'Archivio della Federazione Italiana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori (1872–1874)* (Milan, 1966), ix–232. According to Masini, Romano erred in his explanation that the documents had been intercepted and copied by the postal authorities at Bologna and then sent on to their destination. While this practice was certainly prevalent, the documents of the correspondence commission were confiscated by police at the home of Francesco Natta, one of the members, and later sent to the judicial authorities in Bologna.

⁵⁹ Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 115. For a partial list of the defendants' names and occupations, see *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), June 18, 1876.

⁶⁰ The trial proceedings are best described in the reports from correspondents "S" and "Y" to the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier and Chaux-de-Fonds), April 2 and May 7

shreds. At one point, when the prosecutor sought to depict Costa and the internationalists as "malefactors," Ceneri exclaimed, "if I had a daughter or something else that I considered the most precious of my treasures, . . . I would rather entrust that daughter or treasure . . . to the 'malefactor' Costa than to one of your perfumed fops, supporters of the throne and altar."⁶¹

Ceneri's depiction of Costa as a paragon of moral rectitude was supported by many character witnesses, some of them eminent figures of Italian society. Count Alessandro Codronchi, the mayor of Imola and a former undersecretary of the interior, testified that Costa was an honest and studious citizen, incapable of common crimes.⁶² Giosuè Carducci, the poet laureate of Italy, depicted Costa as one of the best of his students. Offering his opinion of the International, Carducci explained that "in a world full of new ideas and needs that demand concrete solution, . . . it is certain that the International contains within itself the germs for the solution of many social problems. . . . [Thus,] it is only natural that young people of intelligence and heart are entirely attracted by the ideas of the International."⁶³ Carducci was followed to the witness stand by Aurelio Saffi, former Triumvir of the Roman Republic of 1849 and current chief of the republican party. Saffi spoke of the terrible conditions that the ruling classes had inflicted upon Italy, and paid homage to the good reputations of the accused.⁶⁴

The defendants themselves impressed the jurors favorably. Interpreting the acquittals of their comrades elsewhere and the fall of the Right as a portent of their own fate, nearly all of the internationalists on trial in Bologna assumed a defiant but dignified stance in the courtroom, freely admitting their membership in the International and defending their philosophical principles. Then Costa's lawyer, Barbanti-Brodano, stirred the courtroom by employing a tactic never before witnessed in Italy—he identified himself as an internationalist and declared his personal friendship and solidarity with the accused.⁶⁵ The high point of the trial, however, was Costa's closing statement on June 16. Availing himself of the opportunity to propagandize, Costa attacked the distortions and slanders of the prosecutor, explaining that what the internationalists wanted was "the full and complete development of all the instincts, all the faculties, all the human passions; we want the humanization of man!" Their goal was not the emancipation of the working class alone, but the emancipation of the entire human race. The working class had to emancipate itself from economic

("S"), and June 4 and 18 ("Y"), 1876. Guillaume, the editor of the bulletin, identified "S" as Barbanti-Brodano. He reproduced the articles in *L'Internationale*, 4: 1–4, 20–21.

⁶¹ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), June 4, 1876.

⁶² Romeo Galli, "Andrea Costa," in Galli, *Costa*, 18.

⁶³ Quoted in *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Chaux-de-Fonds), May 7, 1876.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Chaux-de-Fonds and Sonvillier), April 2, 9, June 4, 1876.

poverty, but the privileged classes had to emancipate themselves from the greater evil of moral poverty. To the prosecutor's demeaning accusation that the internationalists possessed neither good faith nor the courage of their convictions, Costa retorted: "So how did we endure so calmly and tranquilly your insults, your prisons, your policemen, and the continuous oppression to which we have been subjected, if we did not have profound faith in the justice of the social vindication for which we strive?" The events of August 1874 were a case in point—the undertaking "was ridiculous, but at the same time sublime." Then Costa rejected the prosecutor's charge that the internationalists were really common malefactors:

My comrades and I are not concerned with the name of malefactors. However, we do take into account that the bourgeoisie, the same bourgeoisie that a century ago was called *straccioni* [men in rags] and *sans culottes* by the nobility, today risen to power, forget their ancient allies, and through their representatives call us malefactors and worse than malefactors. Very well, we accept this title, just as the bourgeoisie once did; and perhaps one day, as the cross, from an instrument of infamy, became a symbol of redemption, this name of malefactor, given to and accepted by us, may indicate the precursors of a new regeneration.

When the applause and shouts of "Bravo!" from the audience died down, Costa declared that, if convicted, the internationalists would not appeal to the Court of Cassation, but would seek vindication from "a much more severe and formidable tribunal, a tribunal, oh citizens, that must one day judge us, the accused, and you, the Judges. We will appeal to the future and to History!"⁶⁶

Early the next morning the bourgeois jurors of Bologna returned a verdict of not guilty. Many considerations influenced their decision: the previous acquittals, most recently of the Roman internationalists at a retrial on May 18; the presentiment that the Left's triumph would herald a new era of toleration; the incompetence of the prosecution; the testimony of renowned character witnesses; the skillful defense by Ceneri and other attorneys; the sympathetic press coverage of the trial; and certainly the dignified comportment of the defendants themselves, young workers and idealists who hardly seemed to fit the government's description as dangerous malefactors, and who already had spent nineteen months in prison for an undertaking easily dismissed as an insignificant escapade. However, the larger pattern of leniency toward the internationalists, in Bologna and elsewhere, must be attributed, above all, to the jurors' ignorance of socialism and the potential threat it represented for the bourgeoisie, as well as to the mood of disapproval for government policies that pervaded Italy at this time. Malatesta said as much years later:

⁶⁶ For the full text of Costa's speech, see Merli, *Autodifesa di militanti operai*, 22–27.

We were absolved despite the most explicit declarations of anarchism, collectivism . . . and revolutionism, because the bourgeoisie, especially in the Mezzogiorno, did not yet feel endangered by socialism, and it was often enough to be enemies of the government to appear sympathetic to the jurors.⁶⁷

This naiveté on the part of the Italian bourgeoisie did not survive the 1870s.

⁶⁷ "Anche questa!—A proposito di massoneria," *Umanità Nova* (Milan), October 7, 1920, in Malatesta, *Scritti*, 1:183. See also A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:186–190; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 355–356; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 213–214; Gonzales, *Costa*, 101.

RESURGENCE AND INSURRECTION, 1876–1877

RECONSTITUTION OF THE ITALIAN FEDERATION

Michael Bakunin died in Bern, Switzerland, on July 1, 1876, at the age of sixty-two. Malatesta best described the special relationship that had existed between Bakunin and the Italian anarchists and the profound affection they felt toward him:

It is to him, more than all others, that we owe the foundation and the early progress of the International in Italy, [and] it is to him that we owe our early revolutionary education. We have always loved him . . . , and his memory will always have a place in our hearts.¹

Although anarchists throughout the country marked his passing with glowing tributes, the loss of Bakunin had no significant impact on the movement. His direct influence over strategy and tactics had virtually ceased after the Bologna insurrection, although Bakuninism still provided the conceptual basis for the anarchists' approach to direct action. In theoretical matters pertaining to the future organization of society, however, some Italian leaders were already beginning to develop ideas that differed significantly from Bakuninist orthodoxy. It was Bakunin's parting advice to the comrades who had gathered secretly in Rome on March 18 that the movement most eagerly heeded—to start all over again.²

The campaign to reconstitute the Italian Federation as a public organization underscored one of the salient features of Italian anarchism: its remarkable ability to bounce back from repression and resume the struggle. The resurgence of 1876 was substantial, with impetus coming primarily from the movement's strongholds in north-central Italy. Costa in June had urged workers nationwide to reorganize, and in July he presided over a regional congress in Bologna at which twenty-four sections reconstituted the Romagnole-Emilian Federation, headquartered in Imola. The delegates paid homage to Bakunin's memory and recommitted themselves to Bakuninist ideology, espousing anarchism, collectivism, and abstentionism. Re-

¹ Speech to the Bern congress of October 1876, in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:487.

² Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 92.

jecting the Marxian conception of political struggle aimed at the formation of a workers' state based on authoritarian communism, the Bologna delegates endorsed insurrectionist tactics and reaffirmed anarchist belief that class war had to be waged not for the benefit of the proletariat alone but for the emancipation of the entire human race.³

In Florence the next month, Natta and Grassi convened a regional congress of thirteen sections and reconstituted the Tuscan Federation. Since local leadership was predominantly working-class, the Tuscan delegates showed themselves more favorably disposed toward labor activities than their counterparts in Bologna, where the decisions generally reflected Costa's views. Whereas the Romagnoles and Emilians had sanctioned the collection of funds for strikers and victims of police persecution, the Tuscans went further, advocating the formation of trade unions and mutual aid societies with their own resistance funds. They also declared themselves in favor of "the strike as a means of labor protest against the tyranny of capital."⁴ In the Marches that August, nineteen delegates representing twenty-five sections met in Jesi to reconstitute the Marchigian-Umbrian Federation. Its program was similar to that of the Romagnole-Emilian Federation because Costa's influence in the Marches was strong.⁵

Outside of north-central Italy the movement's rebound was more limited. In the north, especially Milan, anarchism was beginning to meet stiff competition from legalitarian socialism, although regional federations were being reorganized in Piedmont, Lombardy, the Veneto, and Liguria, the latter two regions representing new areas of expansion.⁶ In Rome that September, seven sections met to reconstitute the Roman Federation, albeit bereft of capable leadership. Several Roman chieftains, originally emigrants from other regions, had been expelled from the capital that summer, like Cafiero and Malatesta before them.⁷ Meanwhile, anarchism in Naples had been operating without the men who organized the movement during the late 1860s and early 1870s. Fanelli and Gambuzzi had become inactive, and Palladino went home to Puglia for several years under family pressure. Malatesta and Cafiero, although they returned periodically, were too busy with other activities to devote more than sporadic attention to the local movement. The Federazione Operaio did its best to attract workers for the International, but the task of revitalizing anarchism in Naples fell mainly to

³ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 105–120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 121–124.

⁵ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), September 3, 1876; *Il Martello* (Fabriano), July 29, 1876; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:253; Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, 394–395.

⁶ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), August 6, September 24, 1876; *Il Martello* (Fabriano), September 2, 1876.

⁷ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), September 24, 1876; *Il Martello* (Fabriano), July 29, September 16, 1876; Della Peruta, "L'Internazionale a Roma," 31.

Emilio Covelli, an intellectual whose scholarly propensities and aristocratic bearing made him an unlikely leader of the Neapolitan rank and file—they nicknamed him “Mephistopheles” because he cut a dark and austere figure.⁸ In Sicily, where Salvatore Ingegneros-Napolitano was regularly attacking the Italian Federation in his newspaper *Il Povero*, the anarchists were losing ground to the legalitarians. Elsewhere in the Mezzogiorno the movement was making new inroads in Bari as well as Aquila and several other towns in the Abruzzi. It was also penetrating immigrant colonies abroad: for example, an Italian-language section of the Federation was constituted that fall in Cairo, Egypt.⁹

THE FLORENCE-TOSI CONGRESS

The third national congress of the Italian Federation was scheduled to be held in Florence on October 22, 1876. By the eve of the congress, seven regional federations had been reconstituted: Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Marches-Umbria, Naples, Puglia, Comarca and Lazio, Molise; and sections in Lombardy, Venetia, Sicily, Piedmont, Sardinia, and Abruzzi were striving to federate. The Italian internationalist press, silenced during the repression of 1874–1875, also reappeared. *Il Martello* in Fabriano, officially the organ of the Marchigian-Umbrian Federation, was the most important. The rest included *Il Risveglio* (Siena), *Il Patatrà* (Città di Castello), and *Lo Scarafaggio* (Trapani). *Il Povero* of Palermo and *La Plebe* of Milan, although legalitarian publications critical of anarchist tactics, served as communication vehicles for the Italian Federation and propaganda organs for socialism.¹⁰

The absence of statistical data makes any estimate conjectural, but it is conceivable that the resurgence of the movement in 1876–1877 saw the Italian Federation regain or even surpass its preinsurrectionary strength. Its social composition, however, remained predominantly working-class. One discernable change was the increased participation and influence of working-class women, as well as greater awareness of women's issues.¹¹ Statutes adopted by the Romagnole-Emilian Federation at the Bologna regional congress in July 1876 advocated “completely free union between men and women,” recognized that women must enjoy “the same rights and duties as men,” and insisted that “men and women must be *economically*

⁸ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), August 19, 1876; Masini, *Casiero*, 170–171. Fanelli had been institutionalized after a mental breakdown and would die in January 1877. Gambuzzi reembraced radical democracy. See Lucarelli, *Fanelli*, 155–158, and his *Carmello Palladino: Nuovo contributo alla storia della Prima Internazionale*, reprinted from *Umanità Nova* 29, nos. 36–39 (Rome, 1939): 6–8.

⁹ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), August 19, 26, September 23, 1876; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), October 8, 1876. See below for the legalitarians.

¹⁰ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), September 23, 1876; Masini, *FI: Atti*, 127–136; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), August 6, 20, September 10, October 8, 1876.

¹¹ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), May 27, 1876.

independent of each other" in order to ensure the "human personality and liberty" of each.¹² In October, Luisa Minguzzi organized a women's section in Florence that issued a manifesto to all the women workers of Italy, declaring that "it is not *bourgeois* emancipation of women that we desire, but *human* emancipation, that for which the workers of the entire world unite today in order to fight tomorrow."¹³ Other women's section were soon organized in Aquila, Imola, Perugia, Carrara, Naples, and Prato.¹⁴

The revival of the Federation was accompanied at the grassroots level by widespread discussion of tactics and objectives. Responding to a request from the correspondence commission, a number of sections submitted questions for discussion at the forthcoming congress, dealing with issues such as the organization of sections according to trades, the accumulation of a general resistance fund, participation in elections, and whether socialism should remain indifferent to political forms of government or promote the establishment of a republic.¹⁵ Consideration of these issues would have required the delegates to spend several days in a safe environment conducive to lengthy discussion. But the new interior minister, Giovanni Nicotera, had no intention of granting "malefactors" the freedom to assemble and exchange ideas.

To prevent the internationalists from holding their congress, Nicotera mobilized a large contingent of carabinieri, soldiers, and police in Florence with orders to occupy strategic locations and apprehend suspects. Spies who knew important leaders by sight were brought in from all over Italy to identify delegates as they arrived. Costa was arrested in this manner on the evening of October 19. Natta, Grassi, Massimo Innocenti, and Giovanni Talchi joined him in prison the following day. Delegates who eluded capture tried to convene on October 20. As the meeting hall in Florence had been seized by the authorities, they moved on to nearby Pontassieve, but the entire town was occupied by military forces. Still undaunted, the internationalists set out in search of another locale, marching for nine hours over mountain paths, in total darkness and a torrential rain, until they reached the village of Tosi, high in the Tuscan Apennines.¹⁶

¹² Masini, *FI: Atti*, 115.

¹³ Quoted in *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), October 15, 1876.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; *Il Martello* (Fabriano and Bologna), September 23, 1876, February 10, 1877; *Il Risveglio* (Siena), November 26, December 24, 1876, February 17, 1877; Masini, *FI: Atti*, 137, 332.

¹⁵ Masini, *FI: Atti*, 127–131, 141. Hostetter (*Italian Socialist Movement*, 365) suggests these questions meant that "many segments of the Italian International had begun to reconsider the tactics of the past." While this may have been true of various circles in Lombardy, which were gravitating toward legalitarianism, the great majority of sections still subscribed to orthodox anarchist principles.

¹⁶ Accounts of the Florentine-Tosi congress inevitably differ in detail. The above description is a composite derived from the following sources: Cafiero's unsigned article in the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), October 29, 1876; *Il Martello* (Jesi), Novem-

On the morning of October 21, 1876, thirty-eight delegates, including Cafiero, Malatesta, Covelli, Pezzi, and Minguzzi, assembled at a village inn for the third national congress of the Italian Federation. Before the proceedings could begin, however, a patrol of carabinieri was observed approaching Tosi; the delegates took refuge in the nearby woods, where they conducted business in the pouring rain. The speeches and discussions were brief. Anarchist orthodoxy was unanimously reaffirmed on all matters pertaining to tactics. Only revolution could resolve the social question, and only by means of revolutionary agitation could the anarchists meaningfully arouse the masses. Electoral struggles, whether political or administrative, would misguide the proletariat and transform it into an unconscious instrument of bourgeois political parties. Socialist assistance in the creation of a republic or any other form of government would constitute a betrayal of the cause of humanity.¹⁷

The one key issue over which the Tosi delegates broke with Bakuninist theory pertained to postrevolutionary society. Instead of Bakunin's anarchist collectivism, expressed by the formula "from each according to his ability, to each according to his productivity," the anarchists now embraced anarchist communism, expressed as "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Anarchist communism was preferable to anarchist collectivism, they maintained, because in a truly just society "the notions of *mine* and *yours* have no reason for being."¹⁸

The congress reaffirmed the autonomy of local sections and regional federations, making official decisions binding only upon those who accepted them. Internationalists were urged to propagandize in the countryside, among the armed forces and elementary school teachers, and to expend maximum effort to recruit women. Cafiero and Malatesta were elected to represent the Italian Federation at the Bern congress a few days later, and the new correspondence commission, composed of Natta, Pezzi, and Cafiero, was transferred from Florence to Naples.¹⁹

ber 19, 1876; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 120–121; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 192–193; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 133–134; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 99–100.

¹⁷ Virtually all the internationalist federations, sections, and circles adhered to the congress. Among the other anarchists identified as delegates were Tommaso Schettino, Napoleone Papini, Agostino Pistolesi, Serantoni Fortunato, Temistocle Silvagni, Fernando Cardinali, Gualtiero Sensi, Angelo Zeloni, Francesco Marconi (identified also as Mariani), Natale Cosi, Antonio Castelari, Gioacchino Niccheri, Carlo Leoni, Alfredo Mari, and Eugenio Azzerboni. Enrico Bignami, the editor of *La Plebe*, had been delegated to represent the legalitarian socialists but arrived too late to participate. Masini, *FI: Atti*, 136–138, 140; Pier Carlo Masini, *Gli Internazionalisti: La Banda del Matese (1876–1878)* (Milan and Rome, 1958), 31.

¹⁸ *Il Martello* (Jesi), November 19, 1876.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

The Italians were the first national federation of the Anti-Authoritarian International to formally embrace anarchist communism.²⁰ Their decision, according to Malatesta, was prompted by fears concerning the authoritarian tendencies latent within collectivism. After collectivism became the dominant ideology of the International at the Basil congress of 1869, anarchist thinkers failed to devise an equitable method by which to assign raw materials and the instruments of labor to the individual. Nor did they know how to measure the work of each and assign an exchange value to it. In theory, the "collectivity" would make these determinations, but the more likely prospect was that of individuals becoming empowered to decide, thereby transforming the "collectivity" into a "government." Consequently, according to Malatesta,

we reached the conclusion that the only solution that can realize the ideal of human brotherhood and eliminate all the insoluble difficulties of measuring the effort made and the value of the products obtained is a communist organization . . . , [which eliminates] all reason for struggle between men and . . . all reason for authority and any desire for domination.²¹

The Italian Federation's shift from anarchist collectivism to anarchist communism must be attributed to the influence of Costa, Cafiero, and Malatesta, although who among them made the initial transition is uncertain.²² Costa claimed to have been "the first to speak openly of anarchist communism among the Italians."²³ Nearly two months after his followers endorsed collectivism ("possession of the materials and instruments of products by him who works") at the Bologna congress of July 1876, Costa wrote that "any individual who gives to society according to his capacities must receive from it according to his needs."²⁴ The anarchist historian Max Nettlau, however, believes Cafiero was the first Italian to adopt anarchist

²⁰ The first theoretical elaboration of anarchist communism was made by François Dumartheray, a veteran of the Lyon Commune of 1870, whose pamphlet *Aux travailleurs manuels partisans de l'action politique* (February 1876), reflected the ideas of a group of predominantly Lyonesse refugees who formed the L'Avenir section in Geneva. Max Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo* (Cesena, 1964), 145.

²¹ Errico Malatesta, "Internazionale collettivista e comunismo anarchico," *Pensiero e Volontà* (Rome), August 25, 1926, in *Scritti*, 3:259–260.

²² Hostetter (*Italian Socialist Movement*, 363) and Masini, (*Cafiero*, 178) credit Costa with having been the first Italian to espouse anarchist communism, while Nettlau (see sources cited below) attributes this breakthrough to Cafiero. A. Romano (*Storia*, 3:259–260n. 32) suggests that Costa, Cafiero, Malatesta, and Covelli each arrived at anarchist communism independently.

²³ *Ai miei amici e ai miei avversari* (Cesena, 1881), 3. This rare three-page pamphlet was first published as a letter of September 15, 1881, to *Avanti!* (Cesena), September 18, 1882.

²⁴ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), September 2, 1876.

communism, having been inspired by James Guillaume's pamphlet *Idées sur l'organisation sociale*, a popular work published in 1875, which argued that anarchist society could eventually progress from collectivism to communism after it had achieved material abundance. Cafiero apparently translated Guillaume's pamphlet into Italian and circulated a manuscript copy among his friends. It was during the summer and fall of 1876, according to Nettlau, that Cafiero refined his concept of anarchist communism in the course of discussions with Malatesta and Covelli.²⁵ Malatesta's recollections, on the other hand, suggest that the three comrades developed the new theory while taking walks together along the Gulf of Naples.²⁶

Covelli's contribution to the evolution of anarchist communism among his comrades must have been substantial, as his knowledge of political science and German communist literature was extensive. Born into a wealthy, aristocratic family in Trani, Covelli had been Cafiero's schoolmate in Molfetta. After receiving his law degree from the University of Naples in 1868, Covelli studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin, where—according to Cafiero—he “tore off his bourgeois hide” and became a socialist. Covelli's 1872 essay on Eugen Dühring's *Kritische Geschichte der Nationalökonomie und des Sozialismus* provided the first discussion of Marx's *Das Kapital* ever written by an Italian. His next treatise, *L'economia politica e la scienza*, written in 1874, represented the first Italian work to approach socialism scientifically. That same year Covelli joined the Naples section of the International and began to play a prominent role in the movement. By the late 1870s and early 1880s, Covelli ranked as one of the most important and original thinkers in the Italian anarchist movement.²⁷

The brand of anarchist communism embraced by the Italians at Tosi was similar to that which Peter Kropotkin would later develop and popularize. “We were Kropotkinians before Kropotkin,”²⁸ Malatesta later remarked, meaning that the Italian anarchists of this period believed society would proceed directly to free communism right after the revolution. This vision, as conceived by Cafiero, was predicated on the optimistic assumption that

²⁵ Nettlau's hypothesis was based on information furnished by the veteran anarchist Nicolò Converti in a letter of May 15, 1897. For Nettlau's interpretation and portions of Converti's letter, see “Alcuni documenti sulle origini dell'anarchismo comunista (1876–1880),” *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), November 1, 1933.

²⁶ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 95.

²⁷ Little has been written about Covelli. See Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 103–110, and Cafiero's biographical sketch in *Tito Vezio* (Milan), October 15, 1882, reproduced in *ibid.*, 85–90; Tommaso Detti, “Emilio Covelli,” in Franco Andreucci and Tommaso Detti, eds., *Il movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico, 1853–1943*, 7 vols. (Rome, 1975–1979), 1:125–129. Having withstood intense persecution from the police in several countries, Covelli suffered a mental breakdown in 1884 and eventually died in a psychiatric institution in 1915.

²⁸ Malatesta to Luigi Fabbri, July 11, 1931, quoted in Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 8.

material abundance could be achieved immediately thanks to three new factors of production: (1) harmonious cooperation; (2) introduction of new machines; (3) considerable economy of labor, tools, and raw materials resulting from the elimination of luxury goods and other unnecessary products.²⁹

But questions pertaining to how anarchist communism evolved in Italy or what nuances distinguished one theorist from another had no significance for the movement in 1876. Despite its official adoption by the Federation, communism was not widely discussed among Italian anarchists for at least two years following the Tosi congress. For most, the term *communism* was still synonymous with authoritarianism and statism, and the Italian anarchists continued to call themselves collectivists.³⁰ Even Costa referred to himself as such at the Ghent congress in October 1877, although his report indicated that his conception of collectivism really amounted to anarchist communism.³¹ The same was true of most others as well until Covelli undertook to disseminate the theory of anarchist communism in his manifesto for the Puglian Federation early in 1878. Then Cafiero and Malatesta promoted the theory in their courtroom speeches at the Benevento trial of August 1878. By 1879–1880 anarchist communism was embraced by the majority of anarchists in Italy.³²

THE BERN CONGRESS

The disparate socialist elements that formed the Anti-Authoritarian International in 1872 were held together only by their common opposition to the centralizing ambitions of Marx. Differences over ideology and tactics remained pronounced, and by 1876 most non-Marxist socialists had drifted so far from the anarchists that the Anti-Authoritarian International no longer had any *raison d'être*. The Bern congress of October 26–29, 1876, revealed that centrifugal tendencies had almost reduced the Anti-

²⁹ See Carlo Cafiero, *Anarchia e comunismo* (Bologna, n.d.), 9–22. This book reprinted the address Cafiero delivered before the congress of the Jura Federation in La Chaux-de-Fonds on October 9–10, 1880. It was published originally in Kropotkin's *Le Révolté* (Geneva), November 13 and 17, 1880. A. Romano's assertion (*Storia*, 3:260n. 33) that Cafiero's book restates the ideas Kropotkin expressed in his pamphlet *L'Idée anarchiste au point de vue de sa réalisation pratique* of 1879 ignores the fact that the Italian anarchists had developed the theory of anarchist communism several years before Kropotkin.

³⁰ *Il Risveglio* (Siena), November 12, 1876.

³¹ *L'Anarchia* (Naples), October 28, 1877.

³² Conforti to Nettlau, May 15, 1897, in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), November 1, 1933; Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 146–148, 151–152. See also Letterio Briguglio, "L'anarchismo in Italia fra collettivismo e comunismo," in *Anarchici e anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo: Atti del convegno promosso dalla Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* (Torino, 5, 6 e 7 dicembre 1969) (Turin, 1971), 293–306.

Authoritarian International to an anarchist rump, a development confirmed the following year at the Verviers congress when the anarchists assembled alone.³³

For Cafiero and Malatesta, the Bern congress provided a public forum in which to debate some of the key questions being asked by socialists throughout Europe. Malatesta revealed that at age twenty-three he was already developing into an independent thinker who would leave a unique stamp on anarchist philosophy. Thus he stunned the other delegates when—after offering warm tribute to the departed Bakunin—he objected to the Italian anarchists' always being identified as "Bakuninists." He explained:

We are not [Bakuninists] because we do not share all of Bakunin's theoretical and practical ideas; we are not, above all, because we follow ideas, not men; because we rebel against the habit of embodying a principle in a man, a habit worthy of political parties but completely incompatible with the tendencies of modern socialism.³⁴

Although he eschewed the label, Malatesta still subscribed to a Bakuninist view of the state. At Bern he declared that the state was the organization of authority, a power existing outside, and of necessity against, the people, one that does not arise spontaneously from society but is imposed upon it from above. The state is driven by the instinct of self-preservation and will absorb the strength of the people to ensure its own existence. It can only oppress and exploit. Even a workers' state (*Volkstaat*), Malatesta insisted, would not be different than any other, so he called for "*the complete abolition of the state in all its possible manifestations*." He further noted that, since men were creatures of habit and old forms tended to perpetuate themselves, it would be necessary not only to destroy the state but to prevent the emergence of a new one. To accomplish this, Malatesta called for a "continuous war against established organizations, that which we call *permanent revolution*." But he refused to speculate about how society would be organized after the revolution: "we do not know and we cannot know." Although he had joined with Cafiero in endorsing anarchist communism at the Tosi congress a few days earlier, Malatesta attributed only "very relative importance" to theories about postrevolutionary society. He told the Bern delegates that he considered it impossible to predict human needs, desires, and capabilities.³⁵

On questions of IWA organization and labor tactics, Malatesta's argu-

³³ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 251–253; Stekloff, *History of the First International*, 322–328.

³⁴ Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:487. This important statement, so indicative of Malatesta's personality and thinking, has been overlooked by all biographers and historians except the British anarchist Vernon Richards. See his "Some Notes on Malatesta and Bakunin," *The Raven* 1 (1987): 41.

³⁵ Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:487–490, 494.

ments reflected the strict anarchist orthodoxy of the Italian Federation. Like Costa at Geneva three years earlier, he refused to support efforts to limit membership in the International to workers only. "The goal of the social revolution," he declared, "is not only the emancipation of the working class, but the emancipation of the whole of humanity; and the International, which is the army of the revolution, must group under its banner all revolutionaries, without distinction of class." Malatesta also rejected the notion that trade unionism on the British model—a "reactionary institution"—could achieve positive results in his homeland: "economic conditions in Italy and the temperament of the Italian workers are opposed to it."³⁶

After the conclusion of the Bern congress, in a public announcement intended to clarify once and for all the position of the Italian Federation, Malatesta and Cafiero espoused propaganda of the deed and anarchist communism:

The Italian Federation believes that the *insurrectionary deed*, destined to affirm socialist principles by means of action, is the most effective means of propaganda and the only one which, without tricking and corrupting the masses, can penetrate to the deepest social strata and draw the living forces of humanity into the struggle sustained by the International.

The Italian Federation considers the collective ownership of the products of labor as the necessary complement of the collectivist program, *the cooperation of all for the satisfaction of the needs of each* being the only rule of production and consumption that corresponds to the principle of solidarity.³⁷

Anarchist communism and revolutionary insurrectionism (in one form or another) remained the doctrinal and tactical pillars of the Italian anarchist movement for the rest of the nineteenth century.

THE RISE OF LEGALITARIAN SOCIALISM

Responding to assertions from social democrats that the Italian International had a legalitarian as well as an anarchist branch, Cafiero and Malatesta's postscript dismissed the former as a "small group" of intriguers and opportunists, inspired by "reactionary objectives," who represented "nobody but themselves."³⁸ This characterization was patently false. A small number of evolutionary or legalitarian socialists—Enrico Bignami in Lodi and Milan, Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani in Rome and Milan, and Salvatore Ingegneros Napoletano in Palermo were the principal figures—had been active in Italy from the earliest days of the internationalist movement. From 1874 to 1876, however, the groups associated with these individuals began

³⁶ Ibid., 494.

³⁷ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), December 3, 1876.

³⁸ Ibid.

to coalesce into a distinct legalitarian current and to challenge the anarchists for leadership of Italian socialism.³⁹

The legalitarians occupied an ambiguous position between anarchism and Marxism, closer to the former until 1874, nearer the latter by 1876–1877. They derived much of their ideology from the French socialist and ex-Communist Benoit Malon. Owing more to the scientific positivism of Auguste Comte than to anarchism or Marxism, Malon “sought to unite the most disparate liberal and socialist doctrines in a grand new mix of sentimental eclecticism, to which he gave the name *integral socialism*.”⁴⁰ Malon rejected the conspiratorialism and insurrectionism favored by the Bakuninists, as well as anarchism’s final goal of destroying the state. He shared Marx’s belief that conquest of political power was indispensable for the emancipation of the working class, but did not assert the primacy of political action to conquer state power. Malon believed it possible to transform the state gradually into a purely administrative entity that would create social equality. The proletariat, meanwhile, should use any means to increase its strength and penetrate the bourgeois state.⁴¹

The legalitarians became an important element within the Italian Federation only after the 1874 insurrections. Two ex-Bakuninists, Lodovico Nabruzzi and Tito Zanardelli, founded the Ceresio section in Lugano in November 1875, hoping to organize a new IWA federation that would include Italian socialist workers in the Ticino and in Italy itself.⁴² They criticized the insurrections of 1874 and condemned the Bakuninist methods of the CIR: “Secret conspiracy is one of the most absolute forms of authority. Like a constituted government, it has its autocrats, its dictators, whose will alone is everybody’s law.”⁴³ Their campaign to undermine the anarchists intensified after Malon arrived in Lugano in January 1876. Inspired by Malon, the Ceresio section invited all the sections of the Italian International to attend a regional socialist congress in Lugano that April. The congress was attended only by eleven individuals, including Malon, Nabruzzi, Zanardelli, Bignami, and the Swiss socialist Joseph Favre, and failed to establish a rival federation.⁴⁴

³⁹ On the Italian legalitarians, see Franco Della Peruta, “La banda del Matese e la teoria anarchica della moderna ‘Jacquerie’ in Italia,” in his *Democrazia e socialismo*, 248, 252–264; Masini, “La Prima Internazionale in Italia,” 131–135; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:182–184, 265–268; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 352–354, 368–375; Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, 215–217, 221–224.

⁴⁰ Michels, *Storia critica*, 74.

⁴¹ Malon’s principal work of this period was *Il socialismo, suo passato, suo presente, suo avvenire* (Lodi, 1875). For a summary of Malon’s ideas, see Cerrito, *Radicalismo e socialismo in Sicilia*, 232–235, 307–314.

⁴² For the Ceresio section, see Romano Brogini, “Un gruppo internazionalista dissidente: La sezione del Ceresio,” in Faenza, *Anarchismo e socialismo in Italia*, 187–208.

⁴³ *Almanacco del proletario per l’anno 1876*, quoted in *ibid.*, 195.

⁴⁴ A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:510–523.

With the decline of the Ceresio section, the center of the emerging legalitarian current shifted to Milan, where Bignami published *La Plebe* and would soon be joined by Gnocchi-Viani. Rejecting insurrectionary tactics, the *Plebe* group promoted peaceful socialist propaganda and labor organization, and helped found the Circolo Socialista Figli del Lavoro of Milan in mid-May of 1876 and the Circolo di Studi Economico-Sociali the following month. The Sons of Labor became the organizational hub around which a Lombard Federation of the International was founded in July 1, 1876.

The Lombard federation's program reflected the strong labor orientation of Gnocchi-Viani, now the guiding force of the *Plebe* group. Workers were encouraged to form social studies circles and sections, and to organize themselves into resistance societies federated according to arts and crafts. The legalitarians also called for the creation of a Partito Operaio d'Italia, but not one devoted primarily to political action. For now, characterizing electoral activity as "merely a question of tactics," Bignami, Gnocchi-Viani, and the other legalitarians continued to support political abstentionism. They further manifested their ideological confusion by professing belief in the standard tenets of Bakuninism: federalism, anarchy, and antiauthoritarian collectivism. By favoring trade-unionist agitation instead of insurrectionism, and by opening the door for a workers' party and political action, the legalitarians had moved away from anarchism. Nevertheless, as they were reluctant to accept the primacy of political action and the workers' conquest of state power, the Italian legalitarians still remained well outside the Marxist camp.⁴⁵

For all their eclecticism, the legalitarians offered sound criticism and fresh ideas that the anarchists would have done well to take more seriously. For example, in light of the 1874 failures, the anarchists should have reexamined their excessive faith in the revolutionary instincts of the masses and their exclusive reliance on insurrectionary tactics. Accordingly, they should have been open to the recommendation for greater emphasis on trade unionism and economic struggle, especially since many anarchists, including Bakunin, had long recognized the revolutionary potential of syndicalism. But the anarchists turned a deaf ear to any suggestion of alternative or new tactics. The only legalitarian argument that made an impression upon them was the charge of authoritarianism, and it was partly to dispel this image that the CIRS decided to reconstitute the Italian Federation as a public organization.⁴⁶

As the ideological gulf separating anarchists and legalitarians widened and the polemical exchanges between them became more frequent and

⁴⁵ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 252–260; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 368–370, 375; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:265–267; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 131–132.

⁴⁶ Masini, *Cafiero*, 169–170.

heated, twelve legalitarian sections from Lombardy, Piedmont, the Veneto, Ferrara, and the Swiss Ticino met in Milan on October 15, 1876, to found the Federazione dell'Alta Italia. (Federation of Upper Italy)⁴⁷ Although forcing a schism was not their original intent, when the anarchists at Tosi and Bern reaffirmed orthodox positions on insurrectionism, political action, and trade unionism, the legalitarians realized that coexistence within the same organization had become impossible. Thus the Federazione dell'Alta Italia convened a second congress in Milan on February 17–18, 1877, and declared itself part of the International but independent of the Italian Federation.

The legalitarian federation claimed a membership of thirty-five hundred organized in thirty or more circles and sections. Most of them, however, were propaganda groups rather than workers' societies. Workers and artisans in northern Italy were still organized primarily along the lines of paternalistic mutual aid societies or Mazzinian associations. Nevertheless, having established an operational base in Milan and Lombardy, where the anarchists remained comparatively weak, the legalitarians were ideally positioned to influence factory workers when Italy's industrialization accelerated in the 1880s. Their immediate advantage over the anarchists, however, was in the countryside. The Federation of Upper Italy also counted the General Association of Mantovan Workers among its affiliates, an organization whose membership included 1,666 braccianti and 316 others described as "artists." Committed to developing the political consciousness of the braccianti through education and to helping them attain immediate material improvements, the legalitarians were thus able to introduce a reformist influence among the very class that the anarchists had always considered the key to social revolution in Italy.⁴⁸

LA BANDA DEL MATESE

The anarchists in 1877 were more committed than ever to violent action, specifically propaganda of the deed by means of guerrilla warfare. Theories of propaganda of the deed and guerrilla warfare had been articulated and practiced by a long line of revolutionaries during the Risorgimento, including Pisacane, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Carlo De Cristoforis, Giuseppe Budini, and Carlo Bianco di Saint Jorioz.⁴⁹ Bakunin, too, had posited the concept of propaganda of the deed, not only in his discussions with Debagory-Mokrievich prior to the 1874 insurrection, but earlier, in his *Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis* of 1870, stating that "we must spread our

⁴⁷ *Il Risveglio* (Siena), December 24, 1876. For some typical attacks from the anarchists, mainly against *Il Povero* and Malon, see *Il Martello* (Bologna), February 24, March 10, 1877.

⁴⁸ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 256; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 372–374; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 132, 141; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:267–268.

⁴⁹ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 268–277.

principles, not with words but with deeds, for this is the most popular, the most potent, and the most irresistible form of propaganda."⁵⁰ The Italian anarchists, therefore, were drawing upon both their Bakuninist and native revolutionary heritage, although their immediate inspiration was undoubtedly Pisacane's *Testamento politico*.⁵¹

The decision to undertake another armed insurrection had been made by Cafiero and Malatesta shortly before the Tosi congress, probably in collaboration with Covelli and Pietro Cesare Ceccarelli—the former, above all others, having been responsible for rediscovering Pisacane's works around 1875.⁵² As explained by Ceccarelli, who had seen action in several of Garibaldi's campaigns, the anarchists knew that a few dozen, poorly equipped insurgents could not prevail against infantry and cavalry regiments armed with modern weapons. Their campaign had another objective:

Partisans of propaganda of the deed, we wanted to carry out an act of propaganda; persuaded that revolution must be provoked, we carried out an act of provocation. . . . We were a band of insurgents destined to provoke an insurrection that cannot and must not count on anything but the echo it may find in the population.⁵³

Ceccarelli and his comrades still shared Bakunin's early belief that landless peasants, especially in the Mezzogiorno, were more revolutionary than urban workers and therefore more receptive to propaganda of the deed. They rejected the notion commonly held among democratic revolutionaries that the peasants constituted a reactionary element whose violent uprisings (Jacqueries) invariably aided the old regime. The revolutionary instincts of the peasants, Ceccarelli argued, had been harnessed to reactionary causes because the liberals and democrats had offered them nothing but empty political rhetoric. Now, with socialism to provide awareness and guidance, "the time of the great *Jacquerie* of the modern epoch" was about to begin. The anarchists would launch their insurrection "in the cities or the countryside, with the elements that we have; but in all principal cases our objective must be to provoke the revolt of the peasants, the *Jacquerie*. That is the salvation of the revolution."⁵⁴

For their guerrilla action the anarchists selected the Matese mountain range—

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 195–196.

⁵¹ The similarity between Pisacane's exposition of propaganda of the deed in the *Testamento politico* and the declaration made by Cafiero and Malatesta after the Bern congress is unmistakable.

⁵² For the link between Covelli and Pisacane, see Max Nettlau, *Bibliografie de l'anarchie* (Brussels and Paris, 1897), 119.

⁵³ Ceccarelli to Amilcare Cipriani, March or April 1881, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 390–391. After Cipriani criticized the anarchists for their faith in the peasants, Ceccarelli wrote a lengthy letter describing the insurrection and the theoretical assumptions that inspired it.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 389.

overlapping the provinces of Caserta, Benevento, and Campobasso—only forty miles from headquarters in Naples. The Matese provided rugged terrain, with peaks three thousand to six thousand feet, and “a warlike population” whose combativeness they hoped to rekindle.⁵⁵ Following unification, the peasants of the Matese had fiercely resisted the Piedmontese troops in a civil war invariably mislabeled “brigandage.” Years later the Italian authorities still considered these “descendants of the ancient Samnites” a tough element difficult to repress once aroused.⁵⁶

Cafiero and Malatesta had remained in Switzerland after the Bern congress to raise money for weapons. Cafiero tried unsuccessfully to sell the Baronata, which was now abandoned and in disrepair. Desperate for funds, the two revolutionaries sought employment as construction workers, but no one would hire the unlikely pair. They finally received help from a Russian socialist—a Mademoiselle Smetskaia—who gave them four thousand francs. This mysterious benefactress promised more money for the insurrection if the two Italians would assist in her scheme to purchase her lover’s freedom from prison. Smetskaia’s plan hinged upon an inheritance to which she would have access when she married a suitable Russian aristocrat. The enterprising Smetskaia set her sights on Prince Peter Kropotkin, who had moved to Switzerland from London early in December 1876. The two Italians beseeched Kropotkin to enter into this marriage of convenience for the sake of the anarchist cause. The good prince almost acquiesced, but Guillaume persuaded him in the end to refuse the lady’s hand. Years later, Kropotkin delighted in recounting the story of his first meeting with Cafiero and Malatesta. The thwarted marriage brokers, meanwhile, had to make do with the five hundred to six hundred lire that Cafiero realized from the sale of his last remaining property in Barletta. This was a paltry sum compared to the more than 425,000 lire he had already spent for the Baronata and other enterprises, but together with Mlle. Smetskaia’s donation it was enough to set operation Matese in motion.⁵⁷

Cafiero and Malatesta returned to Naples at the end of December 1876, joining Covelli, Grassi, Pezzi, and Minguzzi to form the general staff of the insurrection. Costa, who had been apprised of their intentions, refused to participate actively, “because”—as he later explained—“the moment seemed to me ill chosen and because the many [insurgents] who were being counted upon existed, unfortunately, only in the heated fantasy of a few; and I said so.”⁵⁸ However, confronted with the determination of his com-

⁵⁵ Ibid., 391.

⁵⁶ Ettore Sernicoli, *L'Anarchia e gli anarchici*, 2d. ed. (Milan, 1894), vol. 1, *La propaganda di fatto, sue origini e suo sviluppo*, 150. Sernicoli was a police inspector under Crispi.

⁵⁷ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 102–103; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:116. It is also likely that Ceccarelli obtained additional funds from his lover, the Countess Caracciolo-Cigala. A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:271–272n. 55.

⁵⁸ Costa, *Ai miei amici*, 2.

rades to proceed with or without him, Costa promised to organize bands in the Romagna and nearby regions that would take action if the rebellion in the south proved successful.⁵⁹ How much stock they placed in Costa's promise is unknown. During February and March, however, Malatesta and Cafiero visited leaders in Genoa, Florence, Rome, Bologna, and several towns in the Romagna to discuss plans and recruit volunteers. Malatesta assumed the additional task of recruiting collaborators among the inhabitants of the Matese. His principal associate in this crucial aspect of the undertaking was Salvatore Farina, an ex-Garibaldian who had participated in the suppression of peasant revolt in the Matese and knew the terrain. Malatesta also recruited Sergei Kravchinsky (nom de guerre "Stepniak"), whom he had met during his Balkan adventure the previous year and who now resided in Naples. A courageous fighter with considerable military experience, this former czarist artillery officer promised to lead the insurrectionary band in person and hastily composed a manual on the art of guerrilla warfare. Altogether, about one hundred militants promised to join the guerrilla band. The anarchists' strategy, Ceccarelli explained, did not call for the seizure of a large city, as in 1874, but required the band "to rove about the countryside for as long as possible, preaching [class] war, inciting social brigandage, occupying small towns and leaving them after having accomplished whatever revolutionary acts we could, and to proceed to that area where our presence would prove more useful."⁶⁰

Circumstances conspired from the outset to prevent the anarchists from carrying out their plan. With at least one spy operating within the Neapolitan group, and with dozens more plying their craft in anarchist circles elsewhere, the government knew by mid-February 1877 that Cafiero and Malatesta were organizing an insurrection.⁶¹ Although they carefully monitored their travels, the police refrained from arresting Cafiero and Malatesta at this juncture. Interior Minister Nicotera wanted the anarchist conspiracy to proceed so he could apprehend the insurrectionists at a chosen moment, preferably when they took up arms, and have a justification for crushing the internationalist movement.⁶² Toward the end of March, as

⁵⁹ Ibid. According to the minister of the interior, armed bands were being formed during early March in Faenza, Forlì, Imola, and Lugo. They were to converge on Bologna while the Matese insurrection was in progress. Gonzales, *Costa*, 164n. 23. Costa later explained that the Romagnoles did not arise in support of the Matese insurrection because the first information they received was that the band had been captured. Costa, *Bagliori di socialismo*, 29.

⁶⁰ Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 391–392. Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 106–108; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:182; Augusta Molinari and Roberto Sinigaglia, "S. M. Stepnjak Kravcinskij: Un rivoluzionario russo tra populismo e terrorismo," *Miscellanea Storica Ligure* 11, nos. 1–2 ([1980]): 38–39.

⁶¹ For police reports documenting their activities, see A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:270, 273, 275, and Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 279–281.

⁶² This conclusion, reached by A. Romano (*Storia*, 3:275) and Della Peruta (*Democrazia e socialismo*, 279), admits no serious doubt.

police surveillance became more intense, the conspirators began to suspect that the government was privy to their plans. Their worst fears were confirmed when Farina disappeared after revealing everything to the authorities.⁶³ Anticipating imminent capture, the anarchists had to choose "either to renounce the undertaking and take refuge abroad, or to precipitate matters, if we did not wish to be arrested without having done anything."⁶⁴ They decided to commence operations on April 5, 1877, one month earlier than originally planned.⁶⁵

On the morning of April 3, Cafiero, Malatesta, and one of Kravchinsky's woman friends detrained at Solopaca and proceeded by carriage to the town of San Lupo, where they took possession of the Taverna Jacobelli, a house Malatesta had rented to serve as a rendezvous point. Posing as English travelers who wanted a quiet rest in the countryside, the trio unpacked several heavy boxes and reconnoitered the surrounding area before returning to Naples. The next evening, Cafiero, Malatesta, Ceccarelli, and thirteen other anarchists arrived at the Taverna Jacobelli, bringing with them two more heavy boxes filled, like the others, with old rifles and equipment. They waited in vain the following day for the rest of the volunteers to arrive. Kravchinsky, Grassi, and two others were arrested that evening upon arriving at Solopaca from Naples; thirteen others were apprehended at nearby Pontelandolfo and in Rome. Later that night, a patrol of four carabinieri took up position under a nearby bridge to keep the Taverna Jacobelli under surveillance. While creeping forward to investigate a light in a window, the carabinieri were discovered and fired upon by the startled occupants of the Taverna. Two of the carabinieri fell wounded, one of them mortally. The anarchists, now convinced that an attack from a larger unit of soldiers was imminent, hastily loaded some rifles and equipment onto three mules and escaped. On the outskirts of San Lupo, quite by accident, they encountered ten comrades from Rome who had eluded the police at Solopaca because they had missed their scheduled train. Joining forces, they headed for the mountains to launch their experiment in propaganda of the insurrectionary deed.⁶⁶

The entire Banda del Matese included twenty-six anarchists, most of

⁶³ It is unclear whether Farina denounced the anarchists at the last moment out of fear, which was Ceccarelli's belief, or whether, as Nettlau and Guillaume maintain, he was an agent provocateur in Nicotera's pay, who had kept the minister informed about the anarchists' activities from the outset. Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 392; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 107–108; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:182.

⁶⁴ Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 392.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 392–392; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), April 22 and 29, 1877; [Malatesta], *Circolare della Commissione di Corrispondenza*, June 8, 1877, in *L'Anarchia* (Naples), August 25, 1877; Eugenio Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato: Studi sociali* (Naples, 1878), 396–405; Police chief to prefect of Naples, April 7, 1877, in A. Romano, *Storia*,

them workers and artisans in their twenties, who had come to join the expedition from the Romagna, the Marches, Umbria, and Tuscany. Malatesta and Cafiero were the only southerners participating.⁶⁷ All of them were willing to risk their lives in this quixotic adventure despite an apprehension of certain defeat. The obstacles confronting the band were formidable indeed. With less than one-third of its intended complement, the band was undermanned as well as poorly armed (twenty-one obsolete rifles, eight revolvers, and eleven bayonets) for a guerrilla action originally intended to last several months. In their haste to escape the carabinieri, the anarchists had left behind rifles, vital equipment, and provisions at the Taverna Jacobelli. Any chance that the band's numbers and supplies might be augmented by the local volunteers Farina had promised to recruit was lost with the spy's betrayal. Even communicating with the local inhabitants presented a problem. Except for the two southerners, Cafiero and Malatesta, none of the insurgents could understand the dialect spoken in the Matese mountains—a mixture of the Neapolitan, Pugliese, and Abruzzese dialects. Outsiders barely able to communicate their ideas and wishes could not fail to arouse suspicion among the xenophobic peasants. Then there was the weather. Starting a month ahead of schedule forced the guerrillas to wage a winter campaign over mountain terrain knee-deep with snow and nighttime temperatures below freezing. Adverse weather conditions compounded the difficulties the band would encounter finding provisions and conducting propaganda. Early discovery of the conspiracy permitted rapid deployment of a counterinsurgency force consisting of twelve thousand troops under the command of General De Sauget. By infiltrating the Matese range with a force this size, the military was able to occupy the larger towns near San Lupo more quickly than the insurgents anticipated, depriving them of access to food, supplies, and a potentially sympathetic population.⁶⁸

3:541–543. Also Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 73–74, 79–84, 87; Della Peruta, “L'Internazionale a Roma,” 31–32.

The articles in the *Bulletin* were sent to the editor, James Guillaume, by Costa, who derived most of his information from the bourgeois press. They are reproduced in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:186–188, with a few textual additions and explanatory notes. Forni was the Naples police chief from 1873 to 1875 and the prosecutor at the Benevento trial of the Banda del Matese. His book contains an account of the insurrection based on the bill of indictment presented at the trial. Malatesta's circular is reproduced in several sources, including Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:211–213, and A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:545–548.

⁶⁷ Ceccarelli in the 1860s had moved from Savignano to Naples, where he owned a shop. Other members are listed below by name, age, occupation, and region: From the Romagna: Ceccarelli's brother Domenico, 27, shopkeeper, Savignano; Giuseppe Bennati, 37, plasterer, Imola; Luigi Castellazzi, 31, shoemaker, Imola; Ugo Conti, 25, butcher's apprentice, Imola; Antonio Cornacchia, 41, mason, Imola; Sante Celoni, 35, stonecutter, Imola; Francesco Ginnasi, 18, student, son of Count Ginnasi of Imola; Carlo Gualandi, 27, mason, Imola; Luigi Poggi, 31, mason, Imola; his brother Domenico Poggi, 24, mason, Imola; Ariodante Facchini, 22, clerk in commerce, Bologna; Uberto Lazzari, 24, mason, Bologna; Domenico Bezzi, 35,

Unless the anarchists intended to engage in propaganda of the deed for the benefit of the few shepherds and goats they might encounter in open country (and most of these had not returned from their winter migration to the plains of Puglia), the band had no alternative except to seek towns free of troops, which necessitated penetrating the military encirclement. Therefore, after escaping the carabinieri at San Lupo and finding several towns bristling with well-armed troops, the band headed northwest toward the area known as the Terra di Lavoro, in the province of Caserta, barely eluding the pursuing cavalry as they marched. Although Cafiero, Malatesta, and Ceccarelli were effectively in charge, the anarchists made a special point of eschewing hierarchy and rank. Formal leadership of the band rotated on a daily basis, the only symbol of authority being a red sash that the "commander" wore around his waist. The few peasants they recruited along the way to serve as mountain guides were paid, not coerced, and the anarchists purchased their food as long as funds lasted. Only later, when desperate and hungry, did they take what they needed to survive, rationalizing their expropriations with the notion that "one doesn't respect property when one makes war on property."⁶⁹

On Sunday morning, April 8, having marched beyond Lake Matese in the direction of the Volturno River, the band came upon Letino, a town of 1,266 inhabitants perched more than three thousand feet in the mountains. No troops were in sight. An opportunity for propaganda of the deed had finally arrived. The peasants of Letino watched in amazement as the anarchist band, wearing red and black cockades and waving a banner of the same colors, entered their town and marched directly to the town hall, where the municipal council happened to be meeting. Declaring King Vittorio Emanuele II deposed, the anarchists gathered tax registers, cadaster records, and other official documents and burned them in the town square, much to the delight of the onlooking peasants. The only documents spared

mason, Ravenna; Giovanni Bianchini, 27, shopkeeper, Rimini. From Tuscany: Alamiro Bianchi, 25, tailor, Pescia; Guglielmo Sbigoli, 30, clerk, Florence; Giuseppe Volponi, 20, mason, Pistoia. From the Marches: Napoleone Papini, 20, student and former editor of *Il Martello*, Fano (or Fabriano?); Sisto Buscarini, 27, porter, Fabriano. From Umbria: Angelo Lazzari, 25, printer, Perugia; Antonio Starnari, 22, upholsterer, Terni (or Filottrano?); Carlo Pallotta, 26, upholsterer, Terni; Francesco Gastaldi, 40, retired artillery officer, origin unknown. See Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 72–73. Masini's list provides a few corrections to that originally published in the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), December 2, 1877, and reproduced in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:281–282. The latter includes the names of eleven other anarchists who were indicted as coconspirators with the twenty-six participants of the Banda del Matese but not tried.

⁶⁸ Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 390, 393; Malatesta, circular of June 8, 1877; Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 74–75, 97.

⁶⁹ Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo* 391. Also Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 405–406, 408, 418–419; Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 97.

from the flames were those of the *Congregazione di Carità*, a charitable organization. The remaining contents of the town hall—a few old rifles, some axes confiscated from illegal woodcutters, and money from the municipal treasury—were distributed to the crowd. To the communal secretary, who feared the authorities would blame him for the loss of the archival holdings, the anarchists provided a document signed by Cafiero, Malatesta, and Ceccarelli, declaring Letino occupied in the name of the social revolution.⁷⁰

Symbolic gestures of revolt completed, Cafiero attempted some propaganda of the word. Mounting the base of a stone column topped with a cross, from which the anarchists had draped their red and black banner, he harangued the peasants for about an hour, explaining the social revolution and how it would bring about their redemption. To one woman's request that they oversee a redistribution of the land before departing, Cafiero responded that the band had to move on to other towns and that the people themselves should carry out the task. On that note, Cafiero exhorted the peasants to action, declaring in the local dialect: "The rifles and the axes we have given you, the knives you have. If you wish, do something, and if not, go f— yourselves."⁷¹ Cafiero's speech was followed by a sermon from the local priest, explaining the new "gospel" and assuring his parishioners that these strangers were "true apostles sent by the Lord to preach his divine laws."⁷²

En route to the neighboring town of Gallo, the anarchists encountered another sympathetic priest who ran ahead of the band, shouting to the startled townsfolk: "Do not fear! Change of government and burning of papers. Nothing more."⁷³ Entering the town with shouts of "Long live the Social Revolution!" the band headed straight for the town hall, where they proceeded to shoot open the locked door. Again, all the official documents were burned, together with a shredded portrait of the king, and whatever weapons and money found were distributed to the crowd. They proceeded next to the mills outside of Gallo, where they broke the counting devices used to tabulate the hated *macinato* tax and exhorted the peasants to "grind as before; all the taxes are hereafter ended."⁷⁴

Here, too, the peasants applauded these symbolic gestures, cheered the insurgents as they departed, and then returned to their daily routine.⁷⁵ The hard lesson learned by the anarchists from these episodes was that suspicion and fear—rooted in experience and common sense—generally combined to

⁷⁰ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 408.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 413–414.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 415–416.

neutralize the "revolutionary" instincts of the Italian peasantry. Malatesta recalled that, after giving a speech at Gallo, a peasant challenged him to explain how they could be sure that the revolutionaries were not police in disguise sent to spy on the peasants and arrest them if they rebelled.⁷⁶ Nor did the anarchists know how to contradict the peasants, Malatesta acknowledged, when they declined their recommendation to collectivize the land, explaining that "the town is in no condition to defend itself, the revolution has not yet erupted on a vast scale, tomorrow the troops will come and massacre us all, etc." ⁷⁷

Still undeterred, the Banda del Matese hoped to escape its pursuers by crossing the mountains and reaching the province of Campobasso in the region of Molise, where the peasants were considered more rebellious. The band managed to cross the Volturno river, where Garibaldi had defeated the Bourbons in 1860, getting as far as the outskirts of Venafro. Malatesta led a scouting party to reconnoiter the town but found it occupied by soldiers. Meeting in the woods, the band decided to backtrack toward Letino in order to reach the Molise by ascending Mount Casamara. They marched for forty-eight hours in rain and sleet. By now the tattered band was out of supplies and desperate for food. Every town they approached was occupied by troops and the snow-covered mountains offered nothing. The prospects for a meal improved when they encountered a shepherd, his young son, and the boy's pet goat. But a flood of tears overpowered their hunger pangs, and the anarchists returned the goat to the little shepherd boy.

Soon the Banda del Matese reached the base of Mount Casamara. The men were in a deplorable state but still determined to make a last-ditch effort to reach unoccupied territory. For several hours they tried to scale the mountain, every step hampered by pouring rain and deep snow, but their shepherd guide could not find the right path. By nightfall, as the band searched for an alternate route, fog enveloped the area, making it impossible to proceed. The band took refuge in a farmhouse just a few miles from Letino. Before long, the farmhouse was surrounded by *bersaglieri* who had been led to the anarchists by a local peasant hoping for a reward. With rifles and ammunition rendered useless from the rain, the Banda del Matese would have been massacred if the elite troops had stormed the farmhouse with guns blazing. But the anarchists were allowed to surrender without a struggle, their defeat mitigated by the secret hope that, in Ceccarelli's words, "one of these days both the Government and the Bourgeoisie will regret having left us alive."⁷⁸

The Banda del Matese did not provoke a peasant uprising. Yet, by cap-

⁷⁶ Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 108–109.

⁷⁷ Malatesta, circular of June 8, 1877.

⁷⁸ Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 395. For details of the band's final days, also see Della Peruta, 393–395; Malatesta, circular of June 8, 1877;

turing national attention for several weeks, it did draw considerable notice to the International and its socialist program.⁷⁹ Over the course of the next year and a half, moreover, the Italian Federation acquired many new adherents. While this expansion cannot be attributed with certainty to the propaganda value of the insurrection, the exploits of the Banda del Matese—contrary to conventional wisdom—did not diminish the appeal of anarchist socialism for Italian workers, and undoubtedly enhanced it in the eyes of some.⁸⁰ And for the anarchists themselves, excepting a few dissenters like Costa, insurrectionism would remain the cornerstone of their revolutionary strategy despite its ostensible failure. The members of the Banda del Matese, even while en route to prison, were contemplating the next opportunity to revolt. Interrogated by a state prosecutor at Gallo as to the purpose of their actions, the still-defiant anarchists replied: “We serve the people’s cause. If we did not succeed this time, we will succeed the next.”⁸¹

The Italian anarchists’ abiding commitment to insurrectionism may appear ill-considered in retrospect, but it was consistent nonetheless with Bakuninist teachings. The serious militants among them still shared his conviction that “we must make unceasing revolutionary attempts, even if we are beaten and completely routed, one, two, ten times, even twenty times . . . if on the twenty-first time, the people support us by taking part in our revolution.”⁸² And besides Bakunin’s teachings, there was the example of the Mazzinians before them, who had persevered in the face of repeated defeat and martyrdom. As heirs to this heroic revolutionary tradition, the anarchists would not abandon insurrectionism after just two setbacks. Furthermore, their determination to persist was further strengthened by the belief that the mission had failed because of practical problems, especially the need to initiate action prematurely. Malatesta and Ceccarelli were convinced that the peasants of the Matese would have responded to their insurrectionary example had the guerrilla band been able to remain active in the field for a month or more. They were sustained in this view by the sympathy with which they had been received by the local inhabitants, and by several minor peasant disturbances that occurred in the wake of their expedition.⁸³ But perhaps nothing confirmed the anarchists’ belief in insurrectionism more than the reaction of the Italian government. If the authori-

Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:184; Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 416–417; lieutenant commander, Royal Carabinieri, to subprefect of Piedimonte d’Alife, April 14, 1877, in Aldo De Jaco, ed., *Gli anarchici: Cronaca inedita dell’Unità d’Italia* (Rome, 1971), 277–282.

⁷⁹ Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 101.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the movement’s continuing growth.

⁸¹ Quoted in *Roma Capitale* (Naples), August 23, 1878.

⁸² “Souvenirs,” in Dragomanov, *Correspondance*, 85.

⁸³ Malatesta, circular of June 8, 1877; Ceccarelli to Cipriani, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 394–395. According to Ceccarelli, the peasants of one community revolted against their landlords and exacted a distribution of money by force; in another, they killed the mayor in expectation that the insurrectionary band was coming to carry out the revolution.

ties believed it impossible for the anarchists to spark a peasant uprising in southern Italy, why would they have deployed twelve thousand troops throughout the Matese range? Surely this small army was intended to intimidate—or if necessary suppress—the local peasants, rather than to track down twenty-six anarchists.

Eventually, of course, even the staunchest of anarchist insurrectionists realized that their faith in the revolutionary and libertarian instincts of the masses had been misplaced. Malatesta, addressing this issue more than a half-century later, acknowledged that workers and peasants, untouched by socialist propaganda, were more likely to be driven by “the ‘instincts’ that were formed from millennial bondage, which drive the workers toward fear and, what is worse, respect and admiration for their masters, and therefore toward docile submission.”⁸⁴ Yet, in the last analysis, the failure of insurrectionary tactics cannot detract from the incredible daring and spirit exhibited by the Banda del Matese. Like the revolutionary giants conjured in Bakunin’s fantasies, the young anarchists of the Banda del Matese possessed the heroic madness and the indomitable faith that enabled them to challenge the world in the hope of saving it.

⁸⁴ Malatesta’s preface to Nettlau, *Bakunin e l’Internazionale*, xxviii.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE ITALIAN INTERNATIONAL, 1877–1878

THE REPRESSIVE MACHINERY OF THE LIBERAL STATE

The Matese insurrection gave Interior Minister Nicotera the pretext he had been seeking to eradicate the International. Nicotera did not oversee the task personally, as a scandal over his violating telegraph secrecy forced his resignation in December 1877. Nevertheless, it was Nicotera's actions that set into motion the repressive campaign that reduced the Italian Federation to little more than a memory within three years. That the destruction of the International in Italy should have fallen to the Historical Left was not without irony. Its principal leaders—Agostino Depretis, Giovanni Nicotera, and Francesco Crispi—were former democrats who had fought against the Bourbons in the name of justice and liberty, many of them suffering persecution and imprisonment in the process. Because of their Risorgimento record, their persistent criticism of the Right's repressive tendencies, and their electoral campaign promising respect for constitutional liberties, the leaders of the Left were expected to chart a new course in government, observing greater tolerance for republicans and internationalists. Their admirers forgot that during the Risorgimento, leading revolutionary democrats like Depretis, Crispi, and Nicotera had been no less determined to preserve the socioeconomic status quo than had the Cavourian liberals.¹

The continuity between the Right and the Left with respect to the persecution of revolutionary subversives has been obscured by the inflated reputation traditionally enjoyed by the former. The eminent historian Federico Chabod suggested that the Right never adopted a policy of systematic repression toward the International because its leaders—Giovanni Lanza and Marco Minghetti—were products of Cavour's liberal ethos and would not go beyond certain limits.² In reality, the vaunted moderation of the Right was merely a function of chronology and circumstance. The persecu-

¹ During the Sicilian campaign of 1860, peasants who sought to appropriate land from the great estates were ruthlessly suppressed by Garibaldi's lieutenant Nino Bixio.

² See "La Libertà e la Legge," in Federico Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896*, 2 vols. (Bari, 1965), 1:424–521 *passim*.

tion anarchists suffered during the early days of the International, Malatesta acknowledged, was a "laughing matter" compared to what followed. He attributed this moderation, however, not to ethical principles but to political expediency—the young liberal state hardly wished to appear as reactionary as the Austrians and Bourbons it had supplanted. As the regime consolidated power and memories of national unification began to fade, the Right's early moderation (which had never applied to labor struggles, especially in the countryside) diminished.³ Yet political considerations continued to restrain the Right throughout its tenure in office. "The Right," Costa observed, "... had a certain interest in leaving a shadow of life to the International, the name of which it used as a bugaboo to keep itself in power."⁴ Once out of office, however, the leaders of the Right reproached the Left unceasingly for allowing the subversive parties too much liberty.⁵ Thus had they retained power until the late 1870s, when pressure to crush the International assumed major proportions, the disciples of Cavour would have been no more constrained by principles of law and ethics than were the former followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi.

Analysis of the suppression of the Italian International must begin with the understanding that the repressive machinery of the liberal state was forged by the Right, originally as a means of dealing with the social unrest that pervaded the newly unified country, especially in rebellious regions, such as Sicily and the Romagna.⁶ The Right's official policy toward public order was expressed in the formula "prevent, not repress" (*prevenire, non reprimere*), which Prime Minister Lanza announced before the Chamber of Deputies on November 25, 1872.⁷ According to this policy, the government should prevent potential disturbances by restricting civil liberties, rather than repress meetings or demonstrations once they threatened disorder. Since constitutional guarantees of the right of assembly were non-existent, at least as applied to the working classes, the Right's policy toward the International spelled prohibition of public and private meetings, dissolution of sections, raids on workshops and homes, mass arrests, and confiscation of personal property, especially incriminating letters and documents. Internationalists apprehended during government sweeps were frequently detained for weeks or even months under "preventive detention" before

³ Malatesta's preface to Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale*, xxiv.

⁴ Report of September 8, 1877, to the Verviers congress, in *L'Anarchia* (Naples), October 6, 1877; also in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:549.

⁵ Saverio Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare politica e diplomatica d'Italia da Novara a Vittorio Veneto*, 5 vols. (Milan, 1923–1940), 2:170–171.

⁶ Ibid.; Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 216; Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925* (London, 1967), 73–77. For a full discussion of law and order in liberal Italy, see John A. Davis, *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Atlantic Highlands, 1988), 159ff.

⁷ Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare*, 2:51.

charges were dropped "for lack of evidence." Those indicted for serious offenses were likely to spend much longer periods in jail awaiting trial, sometimes a year or more. In this manner the government of the Right put Malatesta and Costa out of action for twelve and twenty months, respectively, while preparing their trials for the 1874 insurrections.⁸

And yet these were the mildest methods utilized by the liberal state. The most formidable instruments of repression, capable of wreaking havoc with an individual's life, were *ammonizione* (admonishment or cautioning) and *domicilio coatto* (forced domicile).⁹ Promulgated as part of the public security regulations of March 20, 1865, and modified by the law of July 6, 1871, *ammonizione* was applicable to bums and vagabonds, persons accused of agricultural theft and abuse of pasturage, individuals suspected of being "highwaymen, thieves, swindlers, pickpockets, 'fences,' accessories, *camorristi*, *mafiosi*, smugglers, knifers, and all others discredited for crimes or misdemeanors against persons or property."¹⁰

Ammonizione, although designed originally for common criminals, was readily converted for use against enemies of the state, the anarchists especially. Covered by the public security regulations rather than the criminal law code, the procedure by which a person was placed under *ammonizione* was administrative, not judiciary. Thus the accused did not have a trial or legal defense. On the basis of evidence (it was not necessary for someone to have committed specific misdeeds; "general suspicion" was sufficient) submitted by the police, the accused was brought before a junior magistrate (a *pretore*), who exercised discretionary power and declared the offender under *ammonizione*.

The provisions of *ammonizione* restricted freedom of association and movement to an incredible degree.¹¹ One violation—real or arranged—

⁸ Examples of these practices are cited by the hundreds in the internationalist press of the period.

⁹ Vittorio Lollini, *L'Ammonizione e il domicilio coatto* (Bologna, 1882), esp. 15–147; Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 153–158, 195–200, and his *Politica e magistratura dal 1860 ad oggi in Italia*, in *L'Italia qual è, Politica e Magistratura, Fascismo e Democrazia*, ed. Nicola Tranfaglia (Milan, 1974), 257–262. Feltrinelli published Merlino's three works as a single volume; unfortunately the pages are numbered sequentially and do not correspond to the original editions.

¹⁰ Quoted by Deputy Ercole in *Atti Parlamentari: Discussioni della Camera dei Deputati* (hereafter referred to as *AP*), meeting of December 13, 1876 (Session of 1876–1877), 1:257–258. Also Lollini, *L'Ammonizione e il domicilio coatto*, 16. For all the provisions of *ammonizione*, as given in the revised Zanardellian penal code of 1889, see *Il Codice Penale Italiano: Le disposizioni di coordinamento nonché le Leggi ed i Regolamenti di Pubblica Sicurezza e le principali Leggi penali complementari del Regno d'Italia* (Turin, 1893), pt. 3, 51–60.

¹¹ For example, in 1876, Claudio Zirardini of Ravenna was required to (1) never give cause for any remarks about his conduct; (2) present himself every Sunday, between 9:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M., to the police station to have his residence papers stamped; (3) remain in his hometown and not change domicile without notifying the police and obtaining their consent;

was punishable by several months in jail; additional violations could result in imprisonment or domicilio coatto for several years. Even if their behavior was exemplary and local police were placated, individuals under ammonizione could be deported to domicilio coatto on orders from the Ministry of the Interior.¹² The anarchist Merlino did not exaggerate, therefore, when he declared that "the fear alone of ammonizione casts a family into despair; it demoralizes the man who sees himself exposed from one moment to another, the *bête noire* of agents, to be tracked down like a mad dog, arrested, sent to domicilio coatto, or at least prevented from earning his daily bread."¹³

Domicilio coatto, the weapon used in combination with ammonizione, had also been devised for common criminals and then extended to political subversives by the Right. Once again, the accused was permitted no means of self-defense, his or her fate resting in the hands of a provincial commission of judicial and police officials over which the local prefect presided. Anyone guilty of a variety of petty offenses, or of violating the conditions of ammonizione and "special vigilance," could be condemned to domicilio coatto for a period of one to five years. This meant confinement in a prison such as the Montefilippi fortress above Port'Ercole, or deportation to a small, desolate island, such as Favignana, Lampedusa, Lipari, Pantelleria, Tremiti, and Ventotene. Applied regularly to political subversives throughout the 1870s and 1880s, domicilio coatto became the principal weapon used against the anarchists in the 1890s.¹⁴

THE ANARCHISTS AS "MALEFATTORI"

Promises to inaugurate a new era of political and civil liberty were immediately forgotten after the Left assumed power on March 18, 1876. The Right's public security policy of "prevenire, non reprimere" was retained and the methods of repression, which the Left had previously condemned,

(4) stay out of hotels, cafés, and other public places; (5) remain home from one hour after sunset until dawn, and be present for visits from the police, even at night; (6) not carry weapons of any kind or any object capable of wounding; (7) have a regular job and inform the police about it within eight days of being admonished; and (8) never associate with, or speak to, persons suspected of crimes and misdemeanors or ill fame. *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurasienne* (Sonvillier), September 24, 1876.

¹² Ibid.; Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 197–199; Lollini, *L'Ammonizione e il domicilio coatto*, 17–26.

¹³ Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 196–197.

¹⁴ *Codice Penale*, pt. 3, 61–63; Merlino, *Politica e magistratura*, 258; Davis, *Conflict and Control*, 223–226; Pasquale Villari, *Scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia* (Florence, 1902), 178–183; Richard B. Jensen, "Italy's Peculiar Institution: Internal Police Exile, 1861–1914," in June K. Burton, ed., *Essays in European History: Selected from the Annual Meetings of the Southern Historical Association, 1986–1987* (Lanham, Md., and New York, 1989), 99–114.

were wielded zealously.¹⁵ The Left did, however, introduce one brilliant innovation to the art of political persecution. In his speech to the Chamber of Deputies on December 13, 1876, Nicotera declared that "the broad principles of liberty cannot be applied to the internationalists." Punishments reserved for common criminals, such as *ammunizione* and *domicilio coatto*, could legitimately be applied to the internationalists "without fear of ever encountering a political man" among them. Because "many of the internationalists in Italy are almost illiterate," he explained, "you should not confuse these people with thinkers, scientists, and publicists," who study, discuss, and fight for a principle, a form of government, or an economic system. Politics was merely the banner under which the internationalists cloaked their nefarious activities, their real objective being "to take from those who have, and not even to use the loot for the benefit of all." The International, Nicotera insisted, was merely an "association of malefactors" that the government should not become alarmed about. It had "no political importance whatsoever, nor was it destined to carry out a social revolution."¹⁶

Nicotera's strategy was unprecedented. During the early 1870s, when Europe was still gripped by post-Commune hysteria, the leaders of the Right had wisely understood that Italy should not appear before the great powers as a country threatened by revolution. In their public speeches and diplomatic dispatches, therefore, Prime Minister Lanza and Foreign Minister Visconti Venosti intentionally minimized the strength of the International in Italy.¹⁷ But the Right had never gone so far as to claim that the Italian International did not exist as a political organization. Nor, despite its persecution of them with methods designed for criminals, had the Right ever ceased to regard the internationalists as anything but political enemies, or to prosecute them primarily for political crimes, such as conspiracy against the state.

That the Left should have continued the repressive policies of the Right did not surprise the anarchists. They had never shared the expectations of the progressives who believed the new government would prove more tolerant than its predecessor. Whether from the left or the right, *Il Martello* explained, all politicians—even Nicotera, a former revolutionary and comrade-in-arms of Pisacane—were vicious and oppressive, given the corrupting influence of power.¹⁸ If anything, the anarchists derived satisfaction

¹⁵ Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism*, 76; Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare*, 2:28–29; Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna* (Milan, 1970), vol. 6, *Lo sviluppo del capitalismo e del movimento operaio*, 166.

¹⁶ AP, meeting of December 13, 1876 (Session of 1876–1877), 1:254–255, 268, 270–271.

¹⁷ Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana*, 1:445–448, 500–501.

¹⁸ *Il Martello* (Fabriano), August 19, September 9, 1876.

from Nicotera's policies because they confirmed their contention that all governments were alike, the only guarantor of "true equality and liberty being the complete absence of any constituted authority or power: anarchy."¹⁹

What really infuriated the anarchists was Nicotera's claim that internationalists were not revolutionaries but *malfattori*, that criminal gain rather than justice and liberty was their goal. Responding to Nicotera's libelous speech of December 13, in a special supplement to *Il Martello*, Costa hurled charges of hypocrisy against the ex-Bourbon fighter turned monarchist, denounced his government's double standard of law for the privileged and for the proletariat, and confuted his lies and distortions about the International point by point. Costa concluded his indictment of Nicotera with a rousing challenge:

Persuade yourself once and for all, honorable Minister, the International is not a bone for your teeth. All your calumny, violence, persecution, and force will not stop us. The International is not, as you think, the creation of a few agitators who wish to enrich themselves by despoiling others. It was born, lives, and will die only when it has buried the kingdom of the Bourgeoisie. It is the Christianity, the '89 of the Proletariat, and its coming is fated like the laws of history and the progress of peoples. You can shout, rave, and persecute as much as you like, but the International will triumph.²⁰

By denying political legitimacy to the anarchists and branding them common criminals, Nicotera had devised a brilliant strategy whereby the International would eventually be legally declared an "association of malefactors" and its members persecuted almost at will as criminals and outlaws. But before this strategy could become effective, Nicotera tried to crush the International using conventional tactics of repression. In the Romagna, where authorities feared that Costa would organize guerrilla bands to support his comrades in the south, troops were concentrated in Imola and Forlì. Then Nicotera's prefects struck on April 19, dissolving internationalist sections, suppressing newspapers, and arresting every anarchist of importance. For those not in jail or placed under ammonizione, the only way to escape the government's post-Matese campaign was to go underground or flee into exile.²¹

To Nicotera's chagrin, the anarchists remained tenacious in the face of persecution, still determined—as Bakunin had advised after the 1874

¹⁹ Ibid., September 9, 1876.

²⁰ [Signed "Alcuni Internazionalisti," but by Costa], "Lettera di alcuni Internazionalisti a S. Eccellenza, l'onorevole Barone Nicotera, Ministro degli Interni in Roma," January 25, 1877, in *Supplemento Straordinario al N. 4 del Martello* (Bologna), January 27, 1877.

²¹ Costa's report to the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), April 29, 1877; also his *Bagliori di socialismo*, 29.

insurrection—to try again. Only a few months after the dissolution decrees, anarchists everywhere began to defy arrest by reconstituting the Italian Federation, either secretly or through clever subterfuge. The Naples group, which included several noted veterans (Tommaso Schettino, Niccolò Conventi, and Giovanni Domanico), revived under Covelli's leadership. The foremost anarchist still active in Italy, Covelli launched a new propaganda vehicle, *L'Anarchia*, in August 1877, with help from Palladino and Domanico. In less than two months, however, repeated confiscations by Neapolitan police forced the transfer of *L'Anarchia* to Florence, where it survived under Giovacchino Niccheri's direction for only three issues.²²

In Florence the movement had regained momentum by the summer, as the anarchists organized "instructional circles" that included new adherents from among the city's high number of unemployed. Although IWA sections without the label, these instructional circles were legally constituted as nonpolitical associations and grudgingly tolerated by the police. Similar latitude was not extended to labor agitation. During June and July, anarchists who organized strikes among tobacco workers and stonecutters and led public demonstrations against economic conditions were arrested. The authorities also prevented them from organizing peasant demonstrations in the surrounding countryside.²³

The insurrectionists incarcerated at Santa Maria Capua Vetere and Caserta, meanwhile, were following an internationalist tradition of using time in prison for self-education. Thus Kravchinsky read Marx, Comte, and Ferrari, and taught himself Italian. Matteucci studied English, Spanish, and German. Cafiero wrote a summary of the first volume of *Das Kapital*, which Marx himself considered the best yet written. In addition to educational endeavors, the imprisoned insurrectionists were able to maintain some degree of political activity, despite confinement and their jailor's efforts to keep them incommunicado. Malatesta produced an account of the Matese insurrection that was smuggled out of jail and circulated. A few months later, after secret communications between prisons, the insurrectionists organized themselves into an IWA section called the "Banda del Matese" and smuggled out a letter to Costa in Bern, mandating him to represent the section at the forthcoming congresses at Verviers and Ghent and to support their call for "armed and violent struggle toward which humanity is inex-

²² Costa's report to the Vervier congress, September 1877, in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:549–550; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), October 5, November 4, 18, 1878; *L'Anarchia* (Naples), October 21, 1877; Buccellato and Iaccio, *Anarchici nell'Italia meridionale*, 77; Leonardo Bettini, *Bibliografia dell'anarchismo* (Florence, 1972), vol. 1, pt. 1, *Periodici e numeri unici anarchici in lingua italiana pubblicati in Italia (1872–1971)*, 16–17.

²³ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 199–200; Francesco Pezzi, *Un errore giudiziario ovvero un po' di luce sul processo della bomba di Via Nazionale* (Florence, 1882), 78–79.

orably driven."²⁴ Upon learning about the formation of the section and the transmission of correspondence, an infuriated Nicotera ordered a full investigation to determine how the anarchists had outsmarted prison authorities.²⁵

COSTA AT VERVIERS AND GHENT

Costa had escaped Nicotera's dragnet and taken refuge in Switzerland. Exile was hard but productive for the Romagnole firebrand. In May he went to Bern, where he worked as a house painter and established a friendship with the French anarchist Paul Brousse. An inveterate organizer, Costa formed IWA sections among Italian-speaking workers in Bern, Geneva, and perhaps Saint-Imier. He moved subsequently to Geneva, earning a pittance giving Italian lessons, but spent considerable time in Lugano, which hosted a large colony of exiles, including Pezzi, Minguzzi, and Serafino Mazzotti and his wife Marietta Focaccia, the kindly militants who had nursed Bakunin during the last months of his life. It was in the Pezzi home that Costa met and fell in love with the Russian socialist Anna Kuliscioff.²⁶

Costa had been chosen to represent the Italian Federation at the two international congresses convening in Belgium that fall. The purpose of the Verviers congress of September 6–8, 1877, was to determine the position the anarchists would defend at the universal socialist congress in Ghent a few days later. Besides Costa, there were several major figures of European anarchism participating: Tomás González Morago, José Viñas, Paul Brousse, James Guillaume, and Peter Kropotkin. Yet even in this company Costa distinguished himself as an intransigent.²⁷

Costa was obliged, of course, to discuss the Matese insurrection, the most controversial endeavor undertaken by anarchists in Europe in recent years. His report began with a remarkably insightful analysis of Nicotera's new strategy and how it differed from that of his predecessors on the Right:

The Right sought above all to strike us as a party and as an organization; the Left has sought above all to strike us as individuals. The first dissolved our organizations and decreed mass arrests; the second, although lately it has come to ape the Right, at first attacked each one of us, admonishing him, bringing

²⁴ *L'Anarchia* (Naples), September 22, 1877.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, August 25, September 2, 1877; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 78; Masini, *Cafiero*, 233; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 389n. 20; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:300; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 4:294–295; interior minister to prefect of Caserta, September 19, 1877, in De Jaco, *Anarchici*, 296.

²⁶ Gonzales, *Costa*, 141–142; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 129–130.

²⁷ For the Verviers congress, see Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:523–554; *L'Anarchia* (Naples), September 12 and 22, 1877; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), September 23, 1877; Stekloff, *History of the First International*, 334–339.

him to trial, seeking, in short, to deprive him of the possibility of movement. The Right treated us as political enemies; the Left has sought to defame us, and to have us considered as vulgar malefactors, as bums and vagabonds, who neither wanting nor having anything to do, were waiting to assault the property and lives of other people.²⁸

As for the Matese insurrection, Costa indicated that the decision to carry out this enterprise had been made by individuals, not the Italian Federation, an explanation probably meant to deflect criticism away from the entire movement. Costa defended the Banda del Matese, however, on the grounds that propaganda, as practiced in western Europe, was virtually impossible in southern Italy. Communications were poor and the peasants illiterate and isolated from modern social life. "We are far from declaring ourselves satisfied with the Italian Socialist Movement"; he concluded, "but convinced that only *action* can give the people consciousness of their own strength, we await action without neglecting, however, those means of propaganda that are within our power."²⁹

Costa's weak endorsement of propaganda of the deed, as well as his support for forms of propaganda "within our power," reflected his own ambivalence toward insurrectionism. Nevertheless, for several reasons—the desire to defend his imprisoned comrades from attack, the moral obligation to obey the mandate of the Banda del Matese, and perhaps even the need to make amends for not participating in the insurrection—Costa at Verviers may have advocated a position more extreme than his real inclination at this juncture. In any case, he and Brousse successfully resisted the moderating tendencies of Guillaume and the Jura Swiss, thereby ensuring that the anarchists would confront the social democrats at Ghent with their customary inflexibility.³⁰

The anarchists who attended the universal socialist congress at Ghent from September 9 to 16, 1877—Costa, Guillaume, Kropotkin, Brousse, Morago, and six others—were greatly outnumbered by the social democrats, whose preponderance reflected how socialist forces throughout Europe had realigned within recent years. Costa stood out amid this moderate assemblage, if only because of his speaking style: "the orator speaks with vehemence; he gesticulates; his movements are jerky; at times, his voice hisses," the congressional minutes noted.³¹ But Costa's histrionic delivery,

²⁸ Report of September 8, 1877, in *L'Anarchia* (Naples), October 6, 1877.

²⁹ Ibid. The report is reproduced in Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:548–553, and A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:559–564.

³⁰ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 413; Gonzales, *Costa*, 143; Stekloff, *History of the First International*, 337. For the Verviers resolutions, see *L'Anarchia* (Naples), September 15 and 22, 1877; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), September 23, 1877, and Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:532–537.

³¹ Freymond, *La Première Internationale*, 4:566.

as far as the social democrats were concerned, was matched by his ideological intransigence. He rejected state ownership of property, political parties, trade unions, and collaboration with legalitarian socialists, insisting that violent revolutionary struggle and anarchy constituted the only suitable program for Italy.³² Naturally, Costa and his anarchist comrades were outvoted, and the resolutions adopted at Ghent reflected the social democratic program: state ownership of property; emancipation of the proletariat through political action; encouragement of trade union activity; and rejection of unity and cooperation with the anarchists.³³ Despite his defeat, Costa was undoubtedly impressed by the alternative methods and viewpoints he witnessed at Verviers and Ghent, notably the moderation of Guillaume and the intelligent arguments of German social democrats, such as Wilhelm Liebknecht and Leo Frankel, which may have put legalitarian socialism in a new light for him. Some experts believe that when Costa left Ghent for Paris his ideological metamorphosis had begun.³⁴

REVIVAL AND CONSPIRACY

The first half of 1878 saw the continuing revival of the internationalist movement thanks to a resilient rank and file and the political amnesty granted by King Umberto I on January 19, freeing several important leaders who had been arrested in connection with the Matese insurrection.³⁵ The correspondence commission—Natta, Pezzi, Grassi, and a few others—transferred itself from Naples back to Florence, and began reconstituting the Italian Federation and attracting new members. The real object of these endeavors, however, was another insurrection. As Natta proclaimed at a secret meeting in Florence on January 19, 1878: "Now more than ever it is necessary to prepare the terrain for an imminent uprising."³⁶ Natta and his comrades were contemplating another insurrection because they believed that the Russo-Turkish War would produce a general Eu-

³² Ibid., 4:565–579 passim.

³³ For the Ghent congress proceedings and resolutions, see ibid., 4:555–593; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne*, September 9, 23, 30, 1877; Stekloff, *History of the First International*, 340–348.

³⁴ Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 413; Gonzales, *Costa*, 144.

³⁵ They included Gactani Grassi, Florido Matteucci, Silvio Friggieri, Pietro Gagliardi, Dionisio Ceccarelli, Massimo Innocenti, Leopoldo Ardinghi, and Sergei Kravchinsky, who was immediately expelled from Italy. Another key figure back in action was Francesco Pezzi. He had been arrested prior to the insurrection for stabbing fellow anarchist Tommaso Schettino during an argument, and was released on a provisional basis prior to the amnesty. *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Chaux-de-Fonds), February 11, 1878; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:305–306; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 393n. 31.

³⁶ Quoted in the Florence police chief's report of January 28, 1878, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 207.

ropean conflagration, with wartime conditions of unemployment and privation provoking a response from workers and peasants.³⁷ Rather than an irrational fantasy, this latest insurrectionary scheme reflected the anarchists' understanding of the reciprocal relationship between war and revolution.

Still unaware that the Russo-Turkish conflict would not precipitate the chain reaction they anticipated, the anarchists wanted a coordinated uprising in major urban centers and the formation of armed bands in the countryside at the end of April 1878. That March, Pezzi and Minguzzi conferred with local leaders of the marble quarry workers of the Massa-Carrara area of Tuscany, militant anarchists whose task was to spearhead the insurrection and trigger armed risings in Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Siena, and the Romagna. Costa's arrest in Paris on March 22 upset their timetable, but insurrection remained the anarchists' top priority and the main topic of discussion at the Italian Federation's fourth national congress, held secretly in Pisa on April 11, 1878. The thirteen delegates—most of them from Tuscany—urged “all the Italian anarchist socialists to continue the revolutionary propaganda with great activity and without concern for sacrifices, as the day is not far off when the armed proletariat will topple bourgeoisie, throne, and altar.”³⁸ An interregional meeting of anarchists from Tuscany, the Marches, and Umbria was held in Pisa later that month to discuss plans for a May 1 uprising, but nobody took up arms at the appointed time.³⁹

Although stymied in their pursuit of insurrection, the anarchists labored hard to strengthen the Italian Federation during this period, despite constant harassment from the authorities. Florence reemerged as a major center of activity, with as many as eight new sections in working-class neighborhoods by July 1878, together with several women's sections, and another for youths. Pezzi placed the strength of the Florentine internationalists at 2,556. The police reported only seven hundred affiliates in Florence and its environs, but acknowledged that many more workers professed anarchist beliefs than belonged to the organization. Several IWA sections had been organized among agricultural workers in Tuscany as well. In the Romagna on January 8, representatives of thirty-two sections eluded police and held a regional congress in Forlì, where they reconstituted the Romagnole Federation and reaffirmed its commitment to anarchist socialism. Romagnole sections soon began increasing in number and membership, often at the expense of the republicans. A new correspondence commission, including Covelli, Florido Matteucci, and Giuseppe Foglia, established headquarters in Genoa in May to escape persecution in Florence and to develop the

³⁷ Florence police chief's report of February 26, 1878, *ibid.*

³⁸ Florence prefect's report of May 19, 1878, *ibid.*, 208.

³⁹ Florido Matteucci to Anna Kulisciov, June 23 and September (n.d.), 1878, *ibid.*, 272–273; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 138–139; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 146–147.

movement in Liguria. Although soon arrested, the commission members succeeded in organizing new sections in Genoa, a traditional Mazzinian stronghold. Between May and July, regional congresses were held secretly in Umbria, the Marches, and the Romagna, contributing to the reconstitution of the Marchigian-Umbrian Federation and the revival of activity in the Romagna, where heavy persecution had erased the gains achieved since January. During these same months, a new regional federation was organized in Puglia, and internationalist propaganda was being favorably received by workers in Calabria, the Abruzzi, and the area around Naples. In Lombardy, which the legalitarians now dominated, the anarchists managed to secretly organize several new workers' circles. The Italian Federation even managed to sustain an official publication amid mounting repression that summer: *L'Avvenire*, directed by Arturo Ceretti (brother of Celso) in Modena, which survived for thirteen issues between May and July 1878.⁴⁰

The Italian Federation's tenacious efforts to reorganize and recruit during the first half of 1878—undertaken in an atmosphere of mounting persecution—belie the commonly held notion that the insurrectionary failures of 1874 and 1877 had completely discredited anarchism and helped reduce the International to little more than “a small sect of conspirators, hounded by the police.”⁴¹ Although membership may have been down from 1874,⁴² the trend evidenced not only in traditional strongholds such as Tuscany, the Romagna, and the Marches but in newly penetrated regions such as Liguria and Puglia was one of organizational expansion, not contraction. If government repression had not overwhelmed the movement in subsequent months, the Italian Federation would probably have continued to grow in membership and influence. Insurrectionary tactics might have been discredited in the eyes of mostly legalitarian middle-class intellectuals, but workers and artisans continued to dream of a revolutionary solution to the social question. Anarchism, despite its deficiencies and travails, was still the dominant school of Italian socialism in the summer of 1878.

Ironically, the Italian Federation's reorganization and growth, combined with worker militancy in many parts of Italy, sustained the insurrectionary compulsion historians have considered symptomatic of the movement's decline. Letters from Florido Matteucci, a student and member of the correspondence commission in Genoa, make this abundantly clear. Writing

⁴⁰ Pezzi, *Errore giudiziario*, 80–83; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 201n. 1, 208n. 4; Masini, *FI: Atti*, 197–199; Gonzales, *Costa*, 146–149; *L'Avvenire* (Modena), May 25, June 15, July 6, 1878.

⁴¹ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 146.

⁴² The few statistics pertaining to Federation membership during this period are of uncertain accuracy. According to Costa in June 1877, there were 1,342 internationalists in Emilia and the Romagna, whereas two years earlier there had been over 2,000 members in the Romagna alone. Gonzales, *Costa*, 168n. 60.

to Anna Kulisciov in Paris. Matteucci explained that information received from all over Italy indicated that the workers were weary of enduring terrible conditions and were ready to act, as recent agitation in the Romagna and Calabria attested. What were internationalists to do, Matteucci pondered, when the workers responded to their propaganda by saying: " 'Always words! when do we see action?' " ⁴³ For Matteucci and his comrades there was only one choice, lest they lose credibility in the eyes of the working class:

We believe it is our duty to show the people that we truly desire the Emancipation of Humanity, that we are not afraid of the revolution, that we are certain, as are the people, that only with revolution can we attain our ideal, and that is what we are trying to cause at once. ⁴⁴

THE BENEVENTO TRIAL

After sixteen months in prison, the Banda del Matese stood before the Court of Assizes in Benevento on August 14, 1878. That their fate rested in the hands of a southern middle-class jury was a stroke of good fortune. With the provinces of the Matese mountains under martial law, Nicotera's first impulse had been to hand the insurrectionists over to a military tribunal, a step that could have placed them before a firing squad. The Banda del Matese escaped this grim prospect when Gambuzzi in Naples sought the help of Pisacane's daughter Silvia, to whom Nicotera was both godfather and legal guardian. The young woman appealed to Nicotera in the name of her father's memory to remand the revolutionaries to a civilian court. He acceded to her request. ⁴⁵

The state's legal approach in the Benevento trial reflected the malfattori strategy devised by Nicotera, whose speech in the Chamber of Deputies on April 9, 1877, characterized the Banda del Matese as "dissolute people who have nothing to lose and who seek to profit from disorder." ⁴⁶ Thus the long list of charges developed by the chief prosecutor of Naples in September included not only political offenses, such as incitement to civil war and armed rebellion, and conspiracy to overthrow the government, but common crimes, such as burning of the public registers, destruction of the macinato tax counters, theft of public funds, and willful homicide—the last punishable by death. ⁴⁷

⁴³ Matteucci to Kulisciov, June 13, 1878, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 270.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Monticelli, *Costa e l'Internazionale*, 21–22.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Sernicoli, *L'Anarchia e gli anarchici*, I: 150, and Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 111.

⁴⁷ *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Sonvillier), December 2, 1877. This strategy aroused angry opposition from some of the best legal authorities in southern Italy, who branded the criminal charges "a miserable equivocation cast upon the conscience of the nation"

But the final indictment handed down in December established two sets of charges: (1) conspiracy to change and destroy the form of government, to exhort the inhabitants to arm themselves against the power of the state and incite them to civil war, and to induce some of them to arm themselves against others and to bring devastation, massacre, and pillage against a class or persons; and (2) complicity in the crime of firing upon and wounding two carabinieri, one of whom subsequently died. The lesser charges of burning archives, destroying tax counters, and robbing money were judged to be political crimes and—in accordance with the doctrine of “prevalance”—absorbed by the more serious political charges.⁴⁸

Concerned that the dismissal of the lesser offenses he deemed common crimes would weaken his efforts to convict the insurrectionists as ordinary malefactors, the chief prosecutor appealed the indictment to the Court of Cassation in Naples. His frustration was exacerbated by King Umberto's political amnesty of January 19, 1878, which caused the political conspiracy charges to be dropped.⁴⁹ Now the state's entire case depended upon how the Court of Cassation interpreted the charge of shooting the carabinieri. If the court decided that the carabiniere's death had occurred in the course of political rebellion against the state, the Banda del Matese would go free. If, however, the court decided that the shooting resulted from nonpolitical motives, as the prosecution argued, then Cafiero, Malatesta, and the others might still end up on the scaffold. On February 15, 1878, the Naples Court of Cassation rendered an equivocal decision—the Banda del Matese should be tried on the single charge of fatally shooting the carabiniere, but it would be up to the jury to decide whether the shooting was a political act and therefore subject to the king's amnesty.⁵⁰

While a sympathetic crowd of Benevento townsfolk observed the procession, the twenty-six anarchists of the Banda del Matese, guarded by forty armed carabinieri, were marched in shackles from the prison to the Court of Assizes early on the morning of August 14, 1878. A journalist reported that “all of them are decently dressed, some even elegantly; they have the air of people going to a festival, smiling left and right, anywhere [their gaze]

and addressed a treatise to the Court of Appeals in Naples, demolishing the prosecution's arguments point by point. See *Gl'Internazionalisti di S. Lupo, di Gallo e di Letino innanzi alla Sezione di Accusa di Napoli* (Naples, 1878), 44 and passim.

⁴⁸ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 420–421; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Chaux-de-Fonds), March 4, 1878.

⁴⁹ Kravchinsky, Matteucci, and the six other anarchists arrested at Solopaca and Pontelandolfo before they could join the armed band at San Lupo were released as a result of the king's amnesty, their conspiratorial activities clearly having been political in nature and therefore subject to pardon.

⁵⁰ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 420–424; *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* (Chaux-de-Fonds), February 11, March 4, 1878.

meets a friendly look, anywhere they find the emotionally touched face of a woman or child." The scene reminded him of the old days when "the love of Italy was a fever, when we, too, heavily bound [in chains], smiled at the crowd that cursed with sullen looks the tyranny of the Bourbons."⁵¹

The accused were defended by four attorneys, including Francesco Saverio Merlino, who was only twenty-one years old and trying his first political case. Although he probably had embraced anarchism some years earlier, Merlino's activism was kindled by the Matese insurrection and the Benevento trial. A few days after the arrest of the insurgents, he began to play a leading role in the defense campaign, writing articles and providing legal services. He also developed a close relationship with Malatesta (they had been schoolmates as children), whom he visited frequently in prison. Malatesta influenced Merlino's thinking and stimulated his enthusiasm for the cause. The Benevento trial established Merlino as Italy's foremost legal defender of the anarchists, a role he continued to play after his conversion to legalitarianism in the late 1890s and even after the Fascists took power.⁵²

The chief prosecutor, Eugenio Forni, was a former police chief of Naples. With tortuous logic, Forni argued that the insurrection against the state and the shooting of the carabinieri were separate and distinct acts, the anarchists having fired upon their adversaries out of "blood lust" (*libidine di sangue*), a motive which placed their deed outside the umbrella of the king's political amnesty and within the sphere of common crime.⁵³ Called upon to respond to the charge, Cafiero and Malatesta jointly declared that the goal of their insurrection had been social revolution. They would accept any punishment if found guilty of this act. But they rejected the prosecutor's depiction of them as common criminals and murderers, arguing that his tactics "prove once again that your laws are an inequity, your institutions a mockery, your justice a lie."⁵⁴ The other twenty-five defendants—to Forni's exasperation—followed Cafiero's lead and refused to respond to a line of questioning that would have branded them common malefactors. They expressed a willingness, however, to explain their political program, which the president of the court permitted them to do. Cafiero provided the first

⁵¹ *Il Corriere del Mattino* (Naples), August 20, 1878.

⁵² Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 122–123; Aldo Venturini, "Schizzo biografico-teorico di Saverio Merlino," in [Francesco] Saverio Merlino, *Revisione del Marxismo: Lineamenti di un socialismo integrale* (Bologna, 1945), 1–2; Mario Galizia, "Il socialismo giuridico di Francesco Saverio Merlino: Dall'anarchismo al socialismo (Alle origini della dottrina socialista dello Stato in Italia)," in *Aspetti e tendenze del diritto costituzionale: Scritti in onore di C. Mortati* (Rome, 1977), 1:534–535; and Gianpiero Landi, "Malatesta e Merlino dalla prima internazionale alla opposizione al fascismo," *Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento* 28 (1983): 128–130. Merlino is further discussed in Chapter 9.

⁵³ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 424–446.

⁵⁴ *Il Corriere del Mattino* (Naples), August 20, 1878.

explanation of anarchist communism ever heard in an Italian court.⁵⁵ Malatesta discussed the International and the reasons for the insurrection, explaining that in a society that forced men to become either victims or oppressors, the internationalists chose to become rebels.⁵⁶

Transforming the courtroom into a forum for propaganda was a major triumph for the anarchists. Another was scored by a human tragedy that shocked the nation. As if fate had intervened to validate the anarchists' critique of Italian society, news spread through Benevento that Davide Lazzaretti, a renowned religious mystic who had fought against church and state for many years, had been shot dead by carabinieri while leading a procession of three thousand peasants in Tuscany on August 18. Lazzaretti's death generated sympathy among the jurors for the spirited subversives in the dock. In an atmosphere now tense with anticipation, the defense attorneys and prosecutor presented their final arguments from August 22 to 25. Merlino expressed solidarity with the defendants, denounced the arbitrary power of the police and the judiciary, and attacked the authoritarian state that had sprung from Piedmont's "royal conquest" of Italy. The other attorneys confined themselves to more conventional legal arguments. Forni reiterated his contention that the shooting was an act of blood lust, and appealed to the jurors to protect the institutions of family and private property, and to honor Italy's glorious traditions and the blood of the ancient Romans coursing in their veins by finding the defendants guilty.⁵⁷

On August 25, 1878, after deliberating for only an hour and a quarter, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty on the charge of shooting the carabinieri, thereby rendering moot the issue of whether the act was political or criminal.⁵⁸ Evidently, neither the anarchists' insurrection nor their bold avowals of revolutionary intent had frightened the bourgeoisie of Benevento. In this ancient southern town, renowned as a bastion of conservatism and clericalism, it was enough to be against the government to win sympathy from the jurors. The same sentiments were shared by a majority of the townsfolk, two thousand of whom greeted the anarchists with applause and cheers as they left the courthouse. The crowd accompanied the vindicated rebels as they marched past the prison en route to the best restaurant in town, where they celebrated victory with their first decent meal in sixteen months. Later, when they emerged, the Banda del Matese was acclaimed

⁵⁵ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 424–425; *Roma Capitale* (Naples), August 17, 1878. Portions of Cafiero's courtroom speech are given in Merli, *Autodifesa di militanti operai*, 28–31.

⁵⁶ *Roma Capitale* (Naples), August 17, 1878; *Il Corriere del Mattino* (Naples), August 20, 1878.

⁵⁷ Masini, *Cafiero*, 224–225; Nicola Tranfaglia, "Saggio introduttivo" to Merlino, *L'Italia qual è*, 13; Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 445–447.

⁵⁸ Forni, *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, 447; Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 127.

anew. Noted a sympathetic correspondent, "a trial like this in every province and the government will die by its own hands."⁵⁹

POST-BENEVENTO PARALYSIS

The acquittal of the Banda del Matese was the last triumph of the Italian International. By the fall of 1878, the government was preparing to unleash a new wave of repression that would destroy almost everything the anarchist movement had accomplished since the founding of the Italian Federation in 1872. Cafiero and Malatesta understood that authorities would soon find some pretext to imprison them again, so exile was their only alternative. Cafiero took refuge in Lugano at the beginning of September. Malatesta stayed a few steps ahead of the police for a while longer. First, he returned to his birthplace, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, where he made a gift of several houses he had inherited from his father to the workers who lived in them. Having liquidated the last material vestige of his bourgeois origin, Malatesta thereafter lived the life of a proletarian, earning his daily bread with his hands. Back in Naples for several weeks, Malatesta, together with Palladino and Merlino, tried to check the legalitarian trade unionists and to rally support for an insurrection in Sicily. Unsuccessful, he sailed for Egypt at the end of September. He would not return to Italy for five years.⁶⁰

With Malatesta and Cafiero in exile, direction of the anarchist movement was assumed by other leaders in four areas: Merlino, Palladino, and Ceccarelli in the south; Natta, Pezzi, and Grassi in Florence; Covelli, Matteucci, and Foglia in Genoa; and Domenico Francolini and a few others in the Romagna. Insurrection remained their primary objective, but they lacked the means to launch one. A despondent Matteucci lamented to Kulisciov in September 1878:

We were in such condition that we could go neither forward nor backward . . . and we cannot go ahead for the sole reason that we have nothing to eat. It is an incredible situation: after having made a great and good organization, we are unable to do more, to do what is necessary, because of lack of means.⁶¹

Preoccupied with credibility, Matteucci insisted that the anarchists "absolutely must arise," because failure to carry out the decisions of the Pisa congress "would lead to the discouragement and disesteem that befell the Republican party, which always promised to make a revolution but never

⁵⁹ *Corriere del Mattino* (Naples), August 26, 1878. Also *Roma Capitale* (Naples), August 26, 1878.

⁶⁰ Masini, *Cafiero*, 245; Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 111; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 80; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:320–321; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 397–398.

⁶¹ Matteucci to Kulisciov, September 1878, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 273.

did anything.”⁶² The anarchists continued to obsess about insurrection for many more months. Nevertheless, they could not find a way to resolve the dilemma of limited means nor escape the mounting pressures of government repression. Insurrection was now an impossibility. Even if the movement had been able to obtain the necessary resources, another uprising could not be organized and executed in the face of the government’s resolve to destroy the International once and for all.

⁶² Ibid.

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE ITALIAN INTERNATIONAL, 1878–1880

THE *ATTENTATS* OF 1878

Hopes of greater political tolerance and civil liberty, originally engendered by the Left's ascension to power in March 1876, were kindled anew when Benedetto Cairoli and Giuseppe Zanardelli took office as prime minister and interior minister in March 1878. Universally considered the most liberal government to hold power since unification, Cairoli and Zanardelli—the latter formulated policy—had promised to respect the rights of organizations and individuals, especially the right of association. In matters of public security, they subscribed officially to the formula of *reprimere, non prevenire* (“repress, not prevent”), which they claimed afforded greater liberty of association to subversive organizations than did the formula “prevent, not repress” employed by their predecessors.¹ In practice, Zanardelli's liberal tolerance extended only to respectable, middle-class radicals like the republican irredentists, not to the working-class revolutionaries of the International. Zanardelli condemned the International for spreading teachings that were “the negation of all rights and morality,” and which found “ready and dangerous converts” among the “least educated” of the multitudes.² Italy's double standard of law and justice was still alive and well.

The campaign of repression that the new liberal government would unleash against the International derived purpose and momentum from a series of terrorist acts committed in Italy and abroad. These *attentats*, or violent deeds, crystallized the image that the liberal state had conjured before the eyes of the Italian bourgeoisie for the last four years—the anarchists as dangerous sociopaths. On January 24, 1878, the Russian populist Vera Zasulich wounded General Trepov, the governor of St. Petersburg, in an assassination attempt. On February 9, a bomb was thrown into a procession honoring the late King Vittorio Emanuele II as it passed near the Uffizi

¹ *Discorsi parlamentari di Giuseppe Zanardelli*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1905), 1:92–141; also Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare*, 2: 163–167. The formula “reprimere, non prevenire” had originally been proposed by Prime Minister Bettino Ricasoli on February 25, 1862, but he left office before implementing it.

² From his famous Iseo speech of November 3, 1878, in *Discorsi parlamentari di Giuseppe Zanardelli*, 1:111.

in Florence, injuring several marchers. In Livorno a week later police discovered (or planted) forty-eight rusty, old bombs in the home of an internationalist. That same month, Prince Kropotkin, governor of Kharkov, was shot down by a masked assassin while returning from a ball. On May 11 and June 2, Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany escaped assassination attempts perpetrated, respectively, by the anarchists Max Hoedel and Karl Nobiling. On August 4, the veteran conspirator Sergei Kravchinsky, who had returned to Russia after his expulsion from Italy, assassinated General Mezentsov, head of the dreaded Third Section, or secret police. On October 25, King Alfonso XII of Spain escaped an assassination attempt by the anarchist Juan Oliva y Moncasi.

Although these attentats were unconnected, the Italian authorities—always susceptible to conspiracy theories—were convinced that the International had hatched a plot to assassinate the royal heads of Europe.³ The signal for Italian anarchists to launch these “criminal projects” was allegedly a manifesto distributed by the Romagnole Federation that read: “Arise, arise against the oppressors of Humanity: all the kings, emperors, presidents of republics, [and] the priests of all religions are the true enemies of the people. Destroy with them all the juridical, political, civil, and religious institutions!”⁴ Immediate preventive measures were deemed imperative because King Umberto, his wife Margherita, and their son Prince Vittorio Emanuele were scheduled to begin a tour of the major cities of Italy in November.⁵

Florence, the Italian Federation’s most active center, was the starting point for the crackdown. On September 30, 1878, Pezzi, Natta, and other local activists hosted a secret meeting of regional leaders from Tuscany, the Romagna, the Marches, and the Mezzogiorno to discuss prospects for an insurrection. The new police chief, Luigi Serafini, noted for his harsh treatment of anarchists in the Romagna, undoubtedly knew of this meeting, but it was the arrival of Anna Kulisciov—her Russian nationality and known acquaintance with Vera Zasulich evoking visions of international conspiracy—that prompted him to act. Kulisciov, Natta, and Minguzzi were arrested on October 2. Pezzi and several others followed them to prison on October 10. All were accused of conspiracy against the state, a political crime permitting preventive detention until trial. The authorities struck next at the correspondence commission in Genoa, arresting Covelli, Foglia, and Matteucci, who had escaped the dragnet in Florence; Merlino, Ceccarelli, and others were arrested in Naples for distributing revolutionary manifestos. They drew sentences that kept them imprisoned until April

³ Prefect to police chief of Florence, July 10, 1878, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 213n. 1.

⁴ Quoted by prefect to police chief of Florence, August 31, 1878, *ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

1879. Prior to the arrival of the king and his entourage on November 7, the anarchists in Florence were subjected to another roundup. The royal visit passed without incident, however, and the detainees were released. When they protested the arbitrary arrests, Cesare Battisti, one of the few local leaders still at liberty, was taken into custody.⁶

Just when a respite from police persecution was desperately needed, the International was blamed for a new series of attentats. On November 17, 1878, as the king's cortege proceeded along the Via Toledo in Naples, a young man, armed with a knife hidden in a red flag bearing the inscription, "Death to the King, Long Live the Universal Republic, Long Live Orsini," leaped upon the royal carriage and tried to stab Umberto. As Queen Margherita screamed "Cairolì, save the King!" the prime minister jumped between Umberto and his assailant, receiving a deep leg wound. Umberto escaped with a scratch on his right arm. His would-be assassin, a twenty-nine-year-old cook from Lucania named Giovanni Passanante, was neither an anarchist nor a member of the International. But the Italian public assumed he was both. The government's investigation tried to link Passanante to the International, but no conspiracy was uncovered and the three anarchists arrested as his accomplices were eventually released. At his trial in March 1879, Passanante was speedily convicted and condemned to death. King Umberto commuted his sentence to life imprisonment.⁷

The day after Passanante's assault, monarchists throughout Italy organized demonstrations to celebrate the king's escape from harm. As the procession in Florence passed along the Via Nazionale, a bomb was thrown into the crowd assembled at the Via Guelfa, killing four bystanders and wounding ten others. No one was apprehended at the scene. The next day police arrested fifty-eight suspects, among them Cesare Battisti, who had been released from prison just two hours prior to the bombing. In Pisa on November 20, a bomb was thrown into another monarchist celebration, although no fatalities resulted. The alleged perpetrator, a young carpenter named Pirro Orsolini, was almost killed by the crowd before police took him into custody.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 210; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 402–403; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 141; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:332, 325.

⁷ Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare*, 2:168–169. For a study of Passanante's assassination attempt, trial, and imprisonment, see Giuseppe Porcaro, *Processo a un anarchico a Napoli nel 1878 (Giovanni Passanante)* (Naples, 1975). Porcaro, despite all evidence to the contrary, perpetuates the fiction that Passanante was an anarchist.

⁸ Pezzi, *Errore giudiziario*, 89–93; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 213–214; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 403–404; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 152–153. Paola Feri advances the plausible thesis that the bombs were thrown by police agents in order to excite fear among the middle class and gain public support for the suppression of the International. See her "Il movimento anarchico in Italia dopo la svolta di Andrea Costa, pt. 1," *Il Trimestre* 11, nos. 1–3 (January–September 1978): 7–8.

REPRESSION INTENSIFIES UNDER DEPRETIS

The near assassination of King Umberto and the bombing incidents convinced a majority in parliament that the "ultra-liberal" policies of Cairoli and Zanardelli had brought the nation to the brink of disaster. The right-wing Ruggiero Bonghi declared that the government's liberal policies had been "weak and sluggish in action, timid in conception, pleasing to and favored by the most capricious and subversive parties of the country." Attributing deeds like Passanante's to "bad reading," Bonghi demanded limits on freedom of education. His colleague Marco Minghetti argued for exceptional laws to destroy internationalist and republican associations. The ex-Mazzinian Francesco Crispi maintained that even in a liberal regime the government had the right to prevent as well as repress criminal activity. Nicotera insisted that the government needed more spies to ensure the security of Italian society. In his own defense, Zanardelli claimed that he had made life so difficult for the internationalists with mass trials and other measures that most of its leaders were either in jail or in exile. Nevertheless, with parliamentary leaders of the Right and the Left demanding more intensive repression, the Cairoli-Zanardelli government lost a vote of confidence on December 11 and resigned the next day. A new government was formed with Agostino Depretis as premier and interior minister.⁹

On December 28, 1878, Pope Leo XIII promulgated the encyclical *Quod apostolici muneris*, condemning the "deadly pestilence that winds through the innermost recesses of society and brings it to the extreme danger of ruin"; that is, "the sect of those who, with diverse and barbarous names, call themselves socialists, communists and nihilists." The encyclical offered to utilize the church's enormous power and prestige in the fight against socialism, in exchange for the state's restoring to the church "that condition of liberty with which it can effectively spread its beneficent influences in favor of human society."¹⁰ Rooted in the common fear of socialism, the rapprochement of church and state in Italy had finally begun.

At the end of December 1878, while anathemas were being hurled against the "pestilence of socialism" from every pulpit, Depretis ordered a new wave of arrests that netted almost every anarchist leader still at large, then turned next to the rank and file. Notifying all prefects of the realm that his government's intent was to destroy the "internationalist sect," Depretis recommended that "all members of the International be placed under amonizione . . . and watched closely to catch them in violation and [have them] deferred to the proper Authority."¹¹ The prime minister and his

⁹ Cilibrizzi, *Storia parlamentare*, 2:169-174; also *Discorsi parlamentari di Giuseppe Zanardelli*, 1:111.

¹⁰ Quoted in Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 157-158.

¹¹ Circular from the interior minister, January 20, 1879, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 225-226.

minions shared the belief that widespread application of ammonizione would break the International, especially if—as the Florence police chief noted—“the Judicial Authority can be persuaded once and for all that the adherents of the sect . . . must no longer be considered a political party, but a collection of malefactors.”¹²

Surprisingly, the Italian judiciary had not yet become a pliant accomplice in the government's campaign, if only because the legal status of anarchist associations was still undetermined. There was no legal consensus, for example, on whether membership in the International per se was grounds for ammonizione, and Italy's highest courts frequently rendered inconsistent or contradictory judgments. The Florence Court of Cassation in February 1879 ruled that while membership alone did not constitute sufficient grounds, ammonizione could be applied to members of an association of malefactors that hid its criminal designs under the guise of political organization. The Rome Court of Cassation, in the Ceccarelli case a month later, sanctioned the use of ammonizione against him because the activities of this notorious internationalist must inevitably constitute a threat to persons and property, thus rendering him subject to its provisions.¹³

In practice, since ammonizione was an administrative measure subject to public security regulations rather than judicial procedure, it scarcely mattered that the high courts still hesitated to declare membership in the International grounds for its imposition. Resourceful police had no difficulty concocting a variety of accusations—foul language, association with suspect persons, suspicion of theft, and other crimes against property and persons—to ensnare a targeted individual. And to convict an anarchist for “contravention of ammonizione,” it was enough to discover him talking with another comrade. Hundreds of anarchists fell victim to ammonizione in this fashion.¹⁴

ANTI-INTERNATIONALIST TRIALS OF 1879

That the judiciary still retained some measure of independence and integrity was scarcely in evidence during the proceedings against internationalists indicted for terrorist deeds. The fear generated by the attentats and the high visibility of the trials combined to blind judges and juries alike to the fact that the accused were generally scapegoats selected for sacrifice, the evidence against them nonexistent or manufactured by the police. Pirro Orsolini, the alleged perpetrator of the November 1878 bombing in Pisa,

¹² Report from Florence police chief, January 29, 1879, quoted in *ibid.*, 226.

¹³ See “Indice delle sentenze,” *Il Foro Italiano* 4 (1879): 32–33; *La Nazione* (Florence), February 22, 1879; *La Perseveranza* (Florence), March 26, 1879; Romano Canosa and Amadeo Santosuosso, *Magistrati, anarchici e socialisti alla fine dell'ottocento in Italia* (Milan, 1981), 23–26.

¹⁴ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 225n. 2, 226–228.

was tried in the Siena Court of Assizes on March 12–14, 1879, and sentenced to nineteen years of imprisonment after the jury deliberated twenty minutes. In Florence, Emilio Capellini, who had hurled a bomb into the procession near the Uffizi more than a year earlier—allegedly after “unknown persons” placed the sizzling device into his pocket—had been absolved in April 1879, supposedly for lack of evidence, but more likely because he was not an internationalist. Tommaso Lanfredini, one of four anarchist workers arrested in connection with the bombing, hanged himself in prison after learning of his indictment. His alleged accomplices were tried on May 13–17 in the Court of Assizes and sentenced to twenty-year terms of imprisonment. The only evidence was the testimony of a police agent who claimed he had learned through a “confidential source” that Lanfredini, assisted in a “special way” by the other three, had thrown the bomb.¹⁵

The Via Nazionale bomb trial of May 20–June 5 was a greater travesty. Nine anarchist workers, out of the dozens arrested but eventually released, were tried for premeditated homicide. The prosecution’s main contention—that the anarchists had conspired three days in advance to carry out the attentat of November 18, 1878—was ludicrous. How could the anarchists have had prior knowledge of the November 18 demonstration, which was organized spontaneously to celebrate King Umberto’s escape from Passanante’s blade on November 17? All of the evidence presented came from police informants or individuals who had been bribed or threatened into cooperating. Defense witnesses were prevented from testifying—some placed under ammonizione while the trial was in progress, others arrested when they arrived at the courthouse. Embarrassing questions went unanswered. Why had the accused bomb-thrower, Cesare Batacchi, a noted subversive whom police arrested as a precautionary measure before the king’s visit, been released from jail only two hours before the scheduled demonstration of November 18? How had signs declaring “Death to the Internationalists” materialized on the scene just fifteen minutes after the bomb was thrown?¹⁶

Not satisfied with manufacturing evidence and intimidating witnesses, the state attempted to invalidate the political character of the International by insisting that its membership comprised the “scum of society.” “Look there in the docket at those who claim the right to transform the world!” exclaimed the prosecutor, “Is there a Licurgus, a Cicero, a Socrates among them? Not at all. There is a scene-shifter, a carpenter, a varnisher, a peasant, a tripe seller [*sic*], a miller, a shoemaker, and so on.”¹⁷ The dignity and

¹⁵ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 162; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 214–215; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 143.

¹⁶ Pezzi, *Errore giudiziario*, 96–108, 148–153, 161–168.

¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 142–143.

intelligence demonstrated by these anarchist workers contradicted the prosecutor's disparaging characterization of them but failed to sway the jury. Seven of the nine defendants received long sentences: Cesare Batacchi, life imprisonment; Giuseppe Scarlotti and Agenore Natta (brother of Francesco), twenty years; Pietro Corsi, Natale Nencioni, Aurelio Vannini, and Natale Conti, nineteen years. Two were acquitted. Writing from prison, Scarlotti, an agricultural laborer, captured the essence of the proceedings:

In our trial justice was suffocated by bitter hatred, and the magistracy tricked by a partisan police, who wanted at all cost to strike us, not as authors of the horrible misdeed of Via Nazionale, but as members of the International Workingmen's Association.

... the police wanted to kill the International by identifying its members as a band of maniacal malefactors!¹⁸

Although the internationalists accused of terrorist deeds stood little chance of a fair trial, those indicted for political crimes like conspiracy, or for common crimes such as constituting an association of malefactors, were still acquitted as often as not. In June 1879, Covelli, Grassi, and three others were acquitted in Genoa and fled into exile. The next month in Massa, fifteen anarchist quarry workers from Carrara were acquitted of constituting an association of malefactors because of IWA membership. Early in September, eighteen defendants (twelve anarchists and six republicans) from Imola were tried in Bologna for subversive activities and criminal association. Fourteen were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment, a decision unpopular with the Bolognesi, who accompanied the condemned to prison shouting "Viva gli Internazionalisti! Viva i malfattori!" Later that month in Modena, Arturo Ceretti and four associates who had published *L'Avvenire* were acquitted of conspiracy. At Forlì, the trial of Domenico Francolini and twenty-four other leaders of the Romagnole Federation charged with criminal association ended in acquittal that October, a verdict sustained upon appeal by the prosecution. In Ancona that month, eleven internationalists from Jesi, after six months in jail under preventive detention, were acquitted of having made "seditious outcries" on the March 18 anniversary of the Paris Commune. The trial of Merlini and Ceccarelli in Lucera also ended in acquittal shortly thereafter.¹⁹

¹⁸ Scarlotti to Fortunato Serantoni, June 11, 1879, quoted in *ibid.*, 158. The sentences were confirmed by the Florence Court of Cassation. Despite depositions from two prosecution witnesses admitting that the police chief had obtained their false testimony in exchange for bribes and promises of favors (see *ibid.*, 161–168), the seven anarchists languished in prison until a pro-Batacchi campaign initiated in 1899 resulted in a full pardon for all on March 16, 1900. Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 216.

¹⁹ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 163; Gonzales, *Costa*, 179–180; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:334–335; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 407; "Indice delle

The most celebrated trial of 1879 began in Florence on November 9. The fourteen defendants included several of the International's most important leaders in Tuscany: Francesco Natta, Francesco Pezzi, Luisa Minguzzi, Ranieri Martini, Oreste Falleri, Dante Marzoli, and Giovacchino Niccheri. Except for Kulisciov and Matteucci, they were all were workers and artisans. Although they had spent more than a year in jail under preventive detention, the defendants could regard themselves fortunate that their arrest and incarceration had occurred before the Via Nazionale bombing, or the government would undoubtedly have linked them to this outrage in order to decapitate the movement. They were charged instead with conspiracy against the security of the state. For the state to prove that the insurrectionary aspirations of the accused had amounted to a genuine conspiracy, however, was not going to be easy. The principal evidence against them—the correspondence between Matteucci and Kulisciov, intercepted the previous summer—proved incontrovertibly that their plans had never progressed beyond the discussion stage. The prosecution's case was also weakened by the presence of Kulisciov, whom a Florentine journalist thus described: "She is little more than twenty years old and looks like a Slav virgin. With the head of a madonna, a light complexion, blushing with health, with long, luminous blond tresses around her shoulders, she made one think of the gracious figures of the pre-Raffaelites."²⁰ If not favorably disposed toward Kulisciov because of her beauty, the jurors were certainly impressed by her testimony, which she delivered with dignity and moderation. She explained that although a socialist, she was not a member of the International, nor did she believe in the effectiveness of insurrectionism. When it became clear that the evidence against Kulisciov was scant, the prosecutor requested that she be acquitted. A guilty verdict for the other defendants might still have been obtained if the prosecutor had not been forced to withdraw from the trial because of illness. The government's case collapsed abruptly when one of the defense attorneys asserted that the substitute prosecutor had previously admitted to him that the trial was a frame-up. The prosecution was unable to refute the damaging allegation, and the jurors acquitted all the defendants on January 5, 1880.²¹

"ASSOCIAZIONE DI Malfattori"

Judicial unwillingness to consider membership in the International a crime halted abruptly in 1880. It is not certain whether the highest courts finally

sentenze," *Il Foro Italiano* 4 (1879): 107; Canosa and Santosuosso, *Magistrati, anarchici e socialisti*, 26–28; Antonio Bernieri, *Cento anni di storia sociale a Carrara (1815–1921)* (Milan, 1961), 128–129

²⁰ Quoted in Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 148–150; Lipparini, *Costa*, 139–140, 142–145; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:335–337.

accepted the government's argument that anarchists were criminals rather than subversives, or whether the magistracy had been pressured into toeing the official line.²² However, on February 16, 1880, the Rome Court of Cassation ruled that an internationalist association composed of five or more persons constituted an association of malefactors under article 426 of the penal code. The court's judgment was a testament to the social bias of the Italian ruling class:

Do peddlers of matches, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, delicatessen sellers, servants of tobacco merchants, and others of this kind only discuss social theories at their meetings? Can they be confused with Saint Simon, Fourier, Owen, Reibaud, and other noted socialists? As it is not possible that such people at their meetings, according to the expression used by the minister of justice to the Chamber of Deputies, "serenely debate like the academicians of Socrates and Plato under the colonnades of Athens or the academicians of Brunetto Latini," one must of necessity believe, and the facts prove it, that *internationalism* is only a mask under which the common malefactor hides.²³

This decision and a similar ruling by the Turin Court of Cassation that July had the effect of stripping the anarchists of all legal status as political subversives and exposing them to the full weight of state repression as alleged malefactors. During the next twenty years—thanks to the inescapable snare provided by article 426 (later 248) of the penal code—the crime of constituting an association of malefactors served as the cudgel with which the government bludgeoned the movement almost at will. Thousands of anarchists were condemned to prison and domicilio coatto not for illegal acts or even the intent to commit them, but solely for the ideas they professed.

By 1880, however, the decisions of the high courts provided only a belated coup de grace. The successive waves of mass arrests, the many months spent in preventive detention while awaiting trial, the complete incapacity that resulted from ammonizione, and the growing diaspora of leaders and militants choosing exile over imprisonment had already taken their toll. The Italian Federation of the International no longer existed as a viable organization.²⁴

²² Merlino, whose family connections kept him exceedingly well informed about the Italian judiciary, claimed that the magistrates of the Criminal Tribunal of Forlì were transferred to distant corners of the country in 1880 for having found internationalists innocent of the charge of constituting an association of malefactors in September 1879. See his *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 160.

²³ *La Legge*, XX (1880), 218ff., quoted in Canosa and Santosuosso, *Magistrati, anarchici e socialisti*, 28–29, and partially quoted in the March 27, 1880, report from the prefect to the police chief of Florence, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 226n. 4.

²⁴ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 89.

THE ITALIAN INTERNATIONAL: AN ASSESSMENT

Most historians of Italian socialism have proceeded from an a priori assumption that the Italian International was doomed to failure because its guiding principles and tactics were anarchist rather than Marxist. Among Marxist historians in particular, the Italian International's shortcomings and failures have been stressed almost to the exclusion of any consideration of its accomplishments, as though a positive assessment of anything the anarchists did would constitute ideological treason.²⁵ This approach is unfair and mistaken. On the other hand, to claim that the Italian International was a major success as a revolutionary organization and workers' association would be equally distortive.

The anarchists placed altogether too much emphasis on immediate direct action, a strategy bound to fail given the realities of the 1870s. Yet the burden of upholding the revolutionary tradition of the Risorgimento, the pressure to respond to popular misery and unrest, as well as the imperatives of Bakuninist ideology all combined to make insurrectionism irresistible. Likewise, the anarchists hurt their own cause by ignoring the potential of revolutionary syndicalism, although here, too, there were objective factors that—in their eyes—undermined the viability of this alternative, notably the profound weakness of the labor movement. But the fact remains, regardless of their many failures and inadequacies, that the anarchists made significant contributions to the future of Italian socialism and labor—and did so under incredibly adverse circumstances.

Some historians have argued that the International—even with its decentralized structure, officially powerless secretariat, and antipolitical philosophy—constituted Italy's first socialist party, perhaps its first political party of any kind, because it possessed characteristics more modern than those of the contemporary consortia and organizations of the democratic-republicans and liberal-conservatives.²⁶ As a party, the International disseminated anarchist socialism throughout the peninsula, acquiring at its height a predominantly working-class membership perhaps as high as twenty-five to thirty thousand, as well as an auxiliary following of sympathizers numbering several times that figure. The International may also have been the first party

²⁵ The thesis that the Italian International was doomed to failure and accomplished very little because of its anarchist ideology pervades all the major works on the subject: A. Romano, *Storia*; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*; Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*; Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*; Enzo Santarelli, *Il socialismo anarchico in Italia* (Milan, 1959). The only historian who does justice to the International's accomplishments is Masini. See his "La Prima Internazionale in Italia."

²⁶ Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 6:54; Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 86; Gino Cerrito, "Le origini del socialismo in Italia," 338. For an interpretation rejecting the thesis that the International was Italy's first socialist party, see Ernesto Ragionieri, *Il movimento socialista in Italia (1850–1922)* (Milan, 1976), 29–30.

that included organized groups of women.²⁷ And while not a mass party by modern standards, the International was sufficiently imposing in its militancy, numerical strength, and influence to convince the Italian government that it had to be destroyed.

Given the anarchists' emphasis on political action against the state rather than economic action against capitalism, their anticlassist approach to revolutionary organization, and their antagonism toward conventional trade unionism, the International was less successful as a labor organization than as a party. Nonetheless, the International was the first federation of workers' organizations in Italy to embrace the concept of proletarian emancipation through revolutionary struggle, and the first to attempt organizing workers along occupational lines to increase their effectiveness in strikes against employers. As such, the International was the legitimate forebear of the League of the Sons of Labor, the economic arm of the Partito Operaio Italiano founded in 1882, as well as the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro founded in 1906. And while it never completed the fusion between political party and workers' movement that the Italian Socialist party sought to achieve after 1892, the International forged ties between socialism and labor that remain unbroken to the present day.

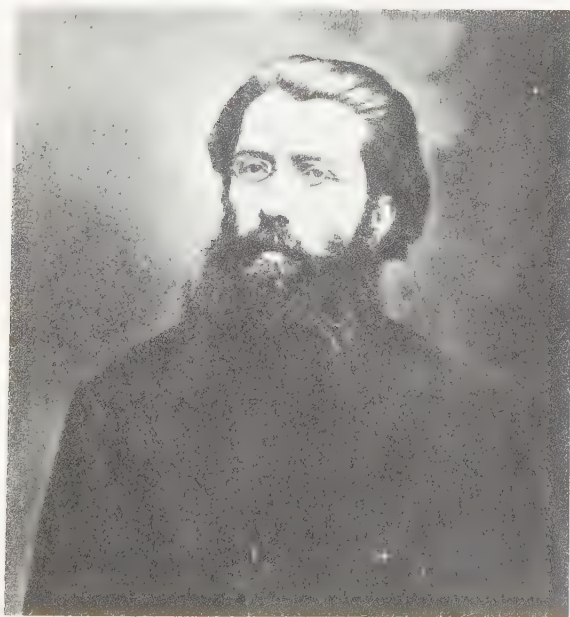
²⁷ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 105; Nicola Capitini Maccabruni, "Francesco e Luisa Pezzi," in *Movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 4: 111.

PART THREE

Crisis, Transformation,
and Decline



1. Michael Bakunin



2. Carlo Cafiero



3. Andrea Costa as a young man



4. Errico Malatesta as a young man



5. Police photograph of Errico Malatesta (1898)



6. Francesco Saverio Merlino in 1892

Chapter Eight

THE DEFECTION OF ANDREA COSTA, 1879–1882

THE EXACT combination of political and psychological factors responsible for Costa's conversion to legalitarian tactics has eluded historians, mainly because his correspondence from this period did not survive.¹ The only major issue on which experts disagree, however, is whether the shift in Costa's thinking had been gestating for several years prior to his conversion or came about during his thirteen-month imprisonment in Paris in 1878–1879. An early shift from orthodoxy may have been evidenced in Costa's open letter of January 25, 1877, to Nicotera, stating that by means of conspiracy a change in the form of government might be obtained, but not social revolution. To accomplish this the internationalists would have to awaken, educate, and organize the workers by means of widespread public propaganda, a process at odds with conspiracy.² Costa again manifested his doubts about conspiracy and insurrection a few months later by trying to dissuade Cafiero and Malatesta from carrying out the Matese uprising. Yet, at the Verviers and Ghent congresses, Costa maintained a rigidly orthodox stance and defended the insurrectionists from all criticism. Nor is there evidence that Costa's lover Anna Kuliscioff exercised a moderating influence over him during this period, as was once commonly believed. Whatever his private doubts about anarchist tactics, Costa had displayed no overt signs of breaking away prior to his arrest in France on March 22, 1878.³

During his imprisonment, Costa became distraught over his separation from Kuliscioff, disillusioned by the International's setbacks in Italy, and fearful of suffering further persecution. These factors combined to produce

¹ For Costa's conversion, see Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 317–338; Roberto Finzi, "Alle radici della 'svolta' di Andrea Costa," Pier Carlo Masini, "Andrea Costa ai congressi internazionali (1872–1881)," and Franco Della Peruta, "La 'svolta' di Andrea Costa," in Berselli, *Costa*, 65–109; also Cerrito, *Costa*, 177–261; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 169–174; A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:338–346; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 412–425; Gonzales, *Costa*, 155–161; Pietro Albonetti, ed., "Saggio introduttivo," to Anna Kuliscioff: *Lettere d'amore a Andrea Costa, 1880–1909*, (Milan, 1976), 27–36, 56–62.

² *Supplemento straordinario al n. 4 del Martello* (Bologna), January 27, 1877.

³ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 317–323; Cerrito, *Costa*, 130–152; Albonetti, *Kuliscioff*, 27–28, 34. In contrast to Della Peruta and Cerrito, Albonetti believes that the "first nucleus" of Costa's turnabout was evident in the winter of 1877–1878.

a spiritual and intellectual metamorphosis that deeply affected the course of Italian anarchism.⁴ In a letter of May 24 to Serafino Mazzotti in Lugano, Costa revealed his determination to explore new approaches, stating his hope that once the reaction subsided the anarchists would support popular demand for a republic and thereby "give a push to things and make them leap even beyond the republic." He feared, however, that because of their disdain for everyday affairs, and their self-imposed isolation, weakness, and practical incapacity, the anarchists would permit the opportunity to be exploited by moderate republicans for their own ends. But Costa vowed to remedy the situation as soon as he left prison, even if the anarchists disapproved of his actions: "Perhaps I will be at odds with some of our friends, but what of it? Willing or not, we are all marching toward the same goal."⁵

Released from prison on June 5, 1879, after a political amnesty, Costa returned to Lugano, where he met with Grassi and other anarchists but gave no indication that he was no longer one of them. He was more candid with Bignami, Malon, and other legalitarian exiles, who saw in Costa the popular leader who could succeed where they had failed and convert the rank and file of the International to evolutionary socialism. Past polemics forgotten, Costa had many long discussions with Malon, who urged him to follow Marx, but, at the same time, to study the idealistic as well as the economic factors in history. With the support of the legalitarians, Costa planned to convene a national congress and reorganize the socialist movement in Italy, using Grassi to reactivate the sections and federations of Tuscany and Ariodante Facchini and others to rally his followers in the Romagna. None of them had an inkling of the new socialist organization Costa envisaged.⁶

The major chord in Costa's well-orchestrated conversion or turnabout (*svolta*) was sounded in his open letter, "To My Friends of the Romagna," of July 27, 1879, published in the *La Plebe*. Ostensibly a plea for the "renewal" of Italian socialism, the letter seemed neither a rejection of anarchism nor an endorsement of legalitarianism. In reality, it was both. Costa did not condemn the uprisings of 1874 and 1877 but insisted that insurrectionism had been counterproductive. Deprived of liberty for years or driven into exile, the internationalists had lost touch with the daily struggles and practices of real life. They had turned inward and concerned themselves more with the

⁴ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 323–325; Cerrito, *Costa*, 152–166. Adamo Mancini, an anarchist friend from Imola, commented a few days after Costa's death in 1910 that his turnabout had not resulted from ambition and self-interest, as so many former comrades believed, but "simply to escape the persecutions of the police." *La Gazzetta dell'Emilia*, January 21–22, 1910, quoted in Gonzales, *Costa*, 175n. 125.

⁵ Quoted in Gianni Bosio and Franco Della Peruta, "La 'svolta' di Andrea Costa, con documenti sul soggiorno in Francia," *Movimento Operaio* 4, no. 2 (March–April 1952): 310–312.

⁶ Lipparini, *Costa*, 134–135; Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 326; Cerrito, *Costa*, 184–185.

logic of their ideas and the quick realization of their program than with studying the economic and moral conditions of the people and their immediate needs. As a result, the internationalists had become too distant from the people, who did not understand or follow when they raised the banner of revolt. Costa urged, therefore, that the internationalists profit from experience and resume the work that had been interrupted by "emerging ourselves once more among the people and finding new strength for our forces in them."⁷

Having rightly underscored the inadequacies of insurrectionism, Costa insisted nevertheless that "we must remain in substance what we were: *a party of action*." Anyone who believed that the privileged classes would peaceably relinquish their power and possessions was naive. Every right and human liberty had been purchased with blood and always would be. Consequently, "the question between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat will of historic necessity resolve itself violently." But no sooner had Costa paid lip service to the inevitability of violent revolution, than he rejected the possibility of its imminent arrival. Experience, he maintained, had taught that revolution was "not a matter of a day or a year." While "awaiting and provoking its inevitable arrival," albeit not with an "action at every moment and at any cost" approach, the internationalists should find a general program around which the "progressive forces of our generation can assemble"—a program with "*Collectivism* as the means, *Anarchy* as the end." Positing anarchist communism as a "distant ideal," Costa espoused "collectivism considered as the economic foundation of society and the federation of autonomous communes considered as its political organization."⁸

To pursue this program, Costa advised that internationalists organize a Partito socialista rivoluzionario, a party comprising a diversity of people—workers, youths, women of the bourgeoisie—who hated existing conditions and wanted more justice in social relations, a party that "must instill in man a new spirit and . . . give its members that force and that moral existence that will make them a living example of new life." Costa refrained, however, from any discussion of the revolutionary socialist party's policy toward the government, collaboration with bourgeois parties, or political and economic reforms—"my letter is already too long"—lest he reveal more at this time than he intended.⁹ For if Costa had fully articulated his new position, the repercussions would have ruined his political career. Survival demanded caution and cunning, if not outright subterfuge.¹⁰

Costa's letter "To My Friends of the Romagna" marked the advent of "maximalist socialism," different from both the anarchist socialism of Caf-

⁷ *La Plebe* (Milan), August 3, 1879.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Cerrito, *Costa*, 177–182.

ero and Malatesta and the evolutionary socialism of Malon and Bignami. Costa's maximalism was premised on the belief that political and economic reforms were needed to develop the revolutionary consciousness and temperament of the proletariat, and that once these politically conscious workers became disillusioned over the failure of reform to change the capitalist system, they would overthrow it by means of violent revolution. Neither in 1879 nor later, however, did Costa realize the fundamental contradiction of his theoretical program, namely, that legalitarian tactics—as the anarchists argued endlessly—would ensure the indefinite postponement, not the ultimate realization, of violent revolution.¹¹

THE ANARCHISTS' EARLY REACTIONS, 1879

The image of Costa, the intransigent anarchist-revolutionary, was so firmly fixed in the minds of anarchists that most of them did not perceive the fundamental changes in thinking and direction suggested by his letter. The initial reaction of several leaders—Grassi, Monticelli, and Merlino—was favorable, as they agreed with much that Costa had said, especially his advice to draw closer to the people.¹² It was Malatesta, whose instincts in such matters were uncanny, who first detected the dissonances in Costa's message and correctly interpreted their meaning. Writing to a Spanish comrade from Rumania, where he had gone on another adventure, Malatesta observed: "Costa is no longer with us. We will utilize this occasion to reorganize seriously in order to free ourselves from elements grown old and to initiate something practical."¹³ At Malatesta's suggestion, the correspondence commission of the Italian Federation, again headquartered in Naples, issued an official reply to Costa that was most likely written or inspired by Cafiero.¹⁴

Already in the throes of his own psychological and intellectual metamorphosis, Cafiero, too, realized that the anarchist movement was in crisis,

¹¹ Leo Valiani, *Storia del movimento socialista* (Florence, 1951), vol. 1, *L'epoca della Prima Internazionale*, 233–234; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 412, 414.

¹² Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 328.

¹³ Letter of August 15, 1879, quoted in Max Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre: Die historische Entwicklung des Anarchismus in den Jahren 1880–1886* (Berlin, 1931), 91–92.

¹⁴ The commission's response, a circular of September 27, 1879, was unsigned. A. Romano (*Storia*, 3: 349) and Masini (*Cafiero*, 262) ascribe authorship to Cafiero. Cerrito (*Costa*, 190) claims that the circular's style, coherence, and irony are reminiscent of Malatesta. Gonzales (*Costa*, 244) says the publication may have been the work of Merlino, who was in Naples at the time and was fast emerging as the principal anarchist in Italy. While neither Malatesta nor Merlino can be discounted, Cafiero was the more likely author. Besides Cafiero's reverence for Pisacane, which Malatesta and Merlino shared but not to the same degree of preoccupation, the circular revealed the antiorganizationist tendencies characteristic of Cafiero rather than Malatesta and Merlino.

but he insisted upon a renewal that would remain true to Pisacanian and Bakuninist principles. His circular—admired even by the Naples police chief for its “inexorable logic”¹⁵—dissected Costa’s letter, exposing its contradictions and obfuscations with surgical precision. With remarkable prescience, Cafiero warned of the authoritarianism and exclusivism inherent in Costa’s moderate socialist party, for such a party would inevitably condemn and exclude revolutionaries out of fear that their actions would compromise peaceful propaganda in the eyes of the government and provoke repression. Peaceful propaganda, such as Costa now recommended, was fruitless and divisive, conditioning revolutionaries to feed on words and cherish utopian dreams. It brought revolutionaries closer to the bourgeoisie, not the people. Workers and peasants did not understand the language of science; they understood the language of action, and it was the duty of revolutionaries to interpret their hopes and show them how to realize them through deeds. And if they had forgotten, Cafiero reminded the anarchists what Pisacane had said on the subject: “Propaganda of the idea is a chimera, the education of the people is an absurdity. Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former.”¹⁶

Rather than form a legalitarian party according to Costa’s vague specifications, Cafiero urged the anarchists to organize the “*party of the social revolution*,” not a reconstituted version of the International, but a secret party devoted to immediate violent action. The anarchists’ past mistake, to which Cafiero attributed their present condition, was that “we did not know how to organize the party,” meaning that the International, as a public institution, had been infiltrated by police spies and easily suppressed by the government. Cafiero had expressed similar sentiments amid the repression that followed the 1874 insurrections, arguing then that “conspiracy has today become the only possible organization of the revolutionary masses in Italy.”¹⁷ Five years later, government repression having finally crushed the International, Cafiero reaffirmed this opinion: “Why must we display all our forces to the public, i.e., to the police, so that they can know how and where to strike us?” The anarchists must reorganize instead by “establishing *secret and firm bonds* between all of us. . . . Only this is *renewal*; only this is *progress*.”¹⁸

Cafiero’s circular represented much more than a reaffirmation of conspiratorial activity and direct action in the manner of Pisacane or Bakunin. The

¹⁵ Quoted in A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:347n. 49.

¹⁶ For the circular of September 27, 1879, see *ibid.*, 3:575–578. The anarchists’ reaffirmation of belief in Pisacane’s theories and methods was also evidenced by Merlini’s pamphlet *Carlo Pisacane* (Milan, 1879). Ironically, the pamphlet appeared in the “Propaganda Socialista” series published by the evolutionary socialists of *La Plebe*.

¹⁷ Report of September 1874 to the Brussels congress, in Masini, *FI: Atti*, 101–104.

¹⁸ Circular of September 27, 1879, in A. Romano, *Storia*, 3:577.

notion that public organization resulted inevitably in police persecution had become an *idée fixe* for many Italian anarchists by 1879, and would provide an important rationalization for the antiorganizationist tendency now forming. Thus Costa's letter and Cafiero's circular signaled the polarity developing within the anarchist movement in response to revolutionary setbacks, government repression, and the collapse of the International. Costa, although he would soon break completely with his old comrades, represented a moderate tendency that opted for a large-scale, public party whose legalitarian tactics would hopefully discourage government repression and reach the people. Cafiero represented an extremist tendency that rejected all forms of organization to avoid persecution, and exalted violence and illegal behavior as the only means capable of rousing the masses to action.¹⁹

COSTA'S ROAD TO LEGALITARIANISM

Following Cafiero's circular came a letter from Kropotkin to *La Plebe*, affirming the primacy that socialist propaganda should give to the idea of expropriating the bourgeoisie; the uselessness of socialists' constituting a political party; and the danger of any interim government organized during the revolution. In reply, Costa claimed to agree with Kropotkin on the first two points; he added, however, that a horror of politics should not blind socialists to the fact that "we live in a political world: [therefore] we cannot and must not remain indifferent to what happens every day." Consequently, while socialists should not constitute themselves into a political party, they should conduct "socialist agitation" that would help transform existing political conditions, after which "we can apply all the living forces of the people to the resolution of the economic question." Meanwhile, since urban workers believed reforms were necessary for their emancipation, Costa recommended that socialists join forces with the workers in a "grand party: to prove to them that the reforms they propose, far from being obtainable by following the radical bourgeois parties, are obtainable only by means of socialistic agitation." In pursuit of the "final goal"—which was anarchy—Costa argued that

the use of this or that means is more or less a matter of indifference; therefore, while adopting at the same time the most appropriate and most available means, let us . . . seek to become a great social force capable of putting into motion all the instruments at our disposal: economic, political, moral forces.²⁰

¹⁹ Masini, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia," 91, 275, and his *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 166.

²⁰ *La Plebe*, November 16, 1879. Kropotkin's letter appears under his pseudonym, "Levachoff."

Costa's verbal nebulosity may have obscured his new ideological orientation for casual readers, but the contrast between his position and Kropotkin's was clear. Whereas Kropotkin's rejection of a socialist party was genuine and implied abstention from voting and participation in political life, Costa's was ritualistic and deceptive. His real intent was for socialists to enter into political struggle, utilizing every means to transform conditions of political development, including participation in elections. Criticism of his proposals and pleas for his return to orthodoxy did nothing to alter Costa's course.²¹

Anarchists who awaited Costa's next moves with perplexed anticipation, hoping that their comrade would reembrace the orthodox program, were sorely disappointed. Evidence of Costa's legalitarian orientation accumulated steadily throughout 1880. At a regional congress in Bologna that March, delegates passed Costa's resolution calling for an Italian socialist party that would include all currents and use all methods to achieve the reforms needed to realize the socialist ideal. The following month, Costa supported *La Plebe's* call for a national congress to establish such a party, but support for the venture was lacking and the meeting never convened. Confident that he could succeed where the Milan legalitarians had failed, Costa launched a new propaganda organ, *Rivista Internazionale del Socialismo* (Milan). In the sole issue, published after his arrest on April 22, Costa argued that, while political reforms would serve only to make the people conscious of the inevitability of economic revolution, socialists should participate nonetheless in electoral contests, hold office in municipal administrations, and even enter parliament if suffrage were broadened. Released from prison on September 17, Costa attended a conference on universal suffrage sponsored by Aurelio Saffi and other democrats in Bologna that November. He insisted that although he had no faith in universal suffrage, he supported the struggle for its acquisition on the grounds that widespread agitation would help radicalize the workers.²²

By the spring of 1880, Costa's shift toward legalitarianism was prompting more concern and disapproval from the anarchists. After the Bologna congress in March, Merlino warned Costa, "when someone has moved onto such a slippery slope, it is necessary to apply the brakes in order to stop in time."²³ Malatesta wrote to his old comrade from Paris that April, saying, "I consider damaging the direction which you wish to give to the socialist

²¹ Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 329–330; Cerrito, *Costa*, 193–194.

²² For Costa's writings and activities during 1880, see Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 330–330; Cerrito, *Costa*, 197–205; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 420–422; Lipparini, *Costa*, 145–153; Gonzales, *Costa*, 180–184.

²³ Merlino to Costa, April 14, 1880, in Pier Carlo Masini, "Lettere inedite di anarchici e socialisti a Andrea Costa (1880)," *Movimento Operato e Socialista* 13, no. 1 (January–March 1967): 58.

movement in Italy. Fortunately, I assure you, you will not succeed; but it saddens me to see you waste activity and compromise a position that could have rendered additional and much more effective service to our cause."²⁴ That same month, Pezzi declined Costa's invitation to attend the congress proposed by the *Plebe* group, noting that "we do not like the Congress, its scope, or the circular convening it."²⁵

By November 1880, few anarchists could doubt the direction in which Costa was heading, and disenchantment with him became the main topic of their letters. Writing to Cafiero, Pezzi observed that the movement was in the grips of "so much disillusionment, so much confusion! And one of the principal causes is Andrea. . . . Only one thing have we acquired: greater experience and less ingenuousness in judging men, at least those who call themselves socialists."²⁶ Cafiero's reply affirmed Pezzi's belief that the movement would ultimately benefit from this loss of innocence: "It is well that we are beginning to lose that ancient optimism we had about people."²⁷ Malatesta, writing to Amilcare Cipriani, confessed that his love and esteem for Costa remained unchanged, but he condemned his recent behavior:

He wanted to enlarge the party's sphere of action by fighting *even* on legal ground, and he ended consciously or not by renouncing all revolutionary means and restricting himself only to legal means. He wanted to reconcile and unite all the socialists . . . and he has succeeded in disgusting and alienating all his old friends and acquiring in exchange the very dubious friendship of people from whom the revolution may not receive real help. In short, he wanted to unite friends and adversaries, and has found himself going over to the adversaries.²⁸

Awareness of the growing rift between Costa and the anarchists did not diminish the government's desire to keep him out of action. Arrested on November 1 for violating the ammonizione decree imposed upon him four years earlier, Costa was imprisoned until January 15, 1881. His liberty restored, Costa founded *Avanti!* in Imola that April to promote the creation of a socialist party and electoral activity. Lacking a strong following outside of the Romagna, Costa failed to organize a socialist party that represented the entire country, settling instead for the Partito Socialista Rivoluzionario di Romagna (PSRR) founded at Rimini on July 24, 1881, a regional party he would dominate completely. The party's program advocated proletarian conquest of political power and "temporary dictatorship," a position that

²⁴ Malatesta to Costa, April 15, 1880, *ibid.*, 59.

²⁵ Pezzi to Costa and Kulisciov, April 19, 1880, *ibid.*, 62.

²⁶ Pezzi to Cafiero, November 3, 1880, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 235.

²⁷ Cafiero to Pezzi, November 20, 1880, quoted in *ibid.*, 225–226.

²⁸ Malatesta to Cipriani, [December 1880], in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 430.

Costa had identified with German communism and condemned only nine months earlier. Costa's acceptance of temporary dictatorship by the working classes horrified not only the anarchists but even the evolutionary socialist Gnocchi-Viani. Yet, for all of Costa's rhetoric about revolution and temporary dictatorship, the PSRR's real emphasis was on economic improvements and sponsorship of socialist candidates for municipal office and national elections. Indeed, even though its members did not know it yet, the PSRR was to become the power base for Costa's political ambitions.²⁹

COSTA THE "APOSTATE"

The anger and dismay toward Costa that had been brewing in the anarchists' ranks finally produced public attacks in the spring of 1881. They targeted not only Costa's political ideas but his personal integrity. Merlino, the coeditor of *Il Grido del Popolo* in Naples, unwittingly set these attacks in motion when he suggested organizing a protest campaign to save Costa from domicilio coatto.³⁰ Matteucci, Falleri, and several other leaders in exile immediately denounced Merlino's plan to aid the "palladin of legalitarian socialism," arguing that many socialists more worthy than Costa were suffering persecution unnoticed. They also took Merlino to task for allegedly trying to rally Italian socialists "not behind the banner of a great principle, but rather behind that of an individual." "The emancipatory ideas, the humanitarian ideas," they declared, "are not manifested in a man, but are represented in the great popular mass."³¹ Covelli joined the polemic, insisting that if any name should appear on the banner of a protest campaign, it should be that of Passanante or Nicola Cordigliani, "authors of deeds that Costa deplores and condemns."³²

Costa responded to his anarchist critics by arguing that they had misunderstood him as well as the legalitarians. There were no legalitarian socialists, he maintained, who believed that reforms alone could resolve the social question, and he himself had always and still believed that violent revolution was inevitable.³³ But Costa's insistence that he was still a revolutionary merely goaded the anarchists to greater fury. Luigi Felicò, the coeditor of *Il Grido del Popolo*, ridiculed Costa's continuing masquerade as a revolutionary,

²⁹ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 163–168, 362–371; Gonzales, *Costa*, 184–190; Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 335–337; Cerrito, *Costa*, 209–222; Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 423–424; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 23–54.

³⁰ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), March 6, 1881.

³¹ *Ibid.*, April 3, 1881.

³² *I Malfattori* (Geneva), May 21, 1881. Cordigliani, a tailor from Viterbo, disrupted parliament by throwing rocks at the deputies from the visitors' balcony on June 25, 1880. He was condemned to five-and-one-half years imprisonment.

³³ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), April 17, 1881.

as well as his assertion that no fundamental differences separated the anarchists from the legalitarians.³⁴ These attacks became much more virulent, however, when Cafiero joined the fray in the summer of 1881. Cafiero had remained publically silent while Costa was in prison, but now that the latter had resumed his activities, working hard to organize the PSRR, Cafiero showed neither mercy nor restraint. Writing to several Romagnole socialists just prior to the Rimini congress, Cafiero proclaimed that “the worst gangrene” affecting the movement “has no other cause than the about-face of Andrea Costa.” Denouncing his former comrade as an apostate, a renegade, and a hypocrite in bad faith, Cafiero charged that Costa had betrayed the revolutionary faith of the people and was deceiving them in full awareness of doing so. Costa’s ambition and vanity would not permit him to declare frankly that he was no longer a revolutionary. Instead, he was exploiting his old reputation to establish a legalitarian socialist party. Cafiero demanded action against the traitor:

My duty is to expose a betrayal; yours is to judge and strike either the traitor or the slanderer. . . . Friends, if you do not want the people to curse the revolution as a new and lying god, do justice to the perfidious charlatan or boldly strike me down as a wicked slanderer.³⁵

Merlino, the most conciliatory of the anarchist leaders at the outset of the polemic, thought Cafiero too severe in his condemnation; but a few months later, he too endorsed the view that Costa was an opportunist posing as a revolutionary: “By not having the courage to confess himself a legalitarian, he continues to pretend to be what he no longer is and to deceive others and himself.”³⁶ The “others” beguiled by Costa’s deception were those Romagnole internationalists who were now flocking to the PSRR, a process that impacted the anarchist movement in ways far more negative than mere loss of numbers. Vittorino Valbonesi, Costa’s foremost critic in the Romagna, lamented publicly that “Andrea asserts a kind of fascination over the souls of those poor in spirit,” and told Malatesta privately that “the majority of the socialists in the Romagna—stupid or deluded—do not permit anyone to attack their supreme *duce* for whom they are more fanatical than the Indians are for their Buddha. . . . Let he who touches *the holy, the infallible* Andrea beware!”³⁷

The last of the anarchist leaders to denounce Costa at this juncture was Palladino. “The desertion of Andrea Costa,” he observed, “is now an ac-

³⁴ Ibid. The article is signed “Inflessibile,” Felicò’s pseudonym.

³⁵ Ibid., July 21, 1881. Masini (*Cafiero*, 275–276) maintains that this letter, which could have been interpreted as a call for the assassination of Costa or himself, was an early sign of Cafiero’s imminent mental breakdown.

³⁶ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), August 19, 1881.

³⁷ Ibid.; Valbonesi to Malatesta, August 14, 1881, quoted in Gonzales, *Costa*, 265n. 41.

complished fact . . . that has provoked a new schism in the heart of the Italian International." Palladino did not deny Costa the right to reject his past and embrace legalitarianism. But he expressed contempt for "the jesuitic artistry with which he prepared and conducted his apostasy, for seducing the naive, and for splitting the Italian socialist party more and more." Costa was not acting in good faith, Palladino insisted, and "now that he has abandoned the cause of the Revolution, I do not hesitate for an instant to call him the worst enemy of the workers." Also castigating those former comrades in the Romagna who were now "blindly following" Costa, Palladino declared their "idolatry" a disgrace. They who once broke with the parties of radical democracy "no longer knew how to resist the fascination of a man who has done more harm to socialism than Mazzini and Garibaldi." For them, "the *tyranny of names* still exercises a tragic power that places principles beneath men."³⁸

COSTA TO PARLIAMENT

The avalanche of anarchist condemnation may actually have strengthened rather than weakened Costa's popularity among his Romagnole followers.³⁹ Nevertheless, the astute Costa knew that personal honor and political survival required a response to the charges against him. In an open letter entitled "To my Friends and to my Adversaries," Costa defended the program he had been developing since July 1879, and denied that he had renounced the revolution or had adopted a program of expediency and reform. He also denied that he had advocated sending socialists to parliament, explaining that he endorsed their taking control of municipalities and running protest candidates only in order to have opportunities "to explain their ideas in committees." Costa insisted that he had always maintained that, "so long as the present political environment lasts, our action as a party can only be undertaken outside of Parliament." Knowing full well that his explanation would placate his supporters rather than persuade his detractors, Costa ended his letter on a defiant note: "However it may be, this is my response. I have answered to everyone and for everything; I will not answer to more. Let those who like mud wallow in it. I wash my hands of it."⁴⁰

All ties with his anarchist past now severed, Costa was ready to embark upon the last leg of his political journey—to parliament. Just one obstacle remained should he be elected. Costa had previously affirmed that socialists should run for parliament only as protest candidates, and if elected, they

³⁸ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), September 18, 1881. For more on the anarchists' early reactions to Costa's defection, see Feri, "Il movimento anarchico in Italia dopo la svolta di Andrea Costa, pt. 1," 10–18.

³⁹ Gonzales, *Costa*, 248, 250–251.

⁴⁰ *Ai miei amici*, 1–3.

should refuse to take the oath of allegiance to the crown, thereby rendering themselves ineligible for office. Costa reconfirmed his commitment to this position at a PSRR conference in February 1881, and continued to do so right up to the national election of October 29, 1882, when he ran for a seat representing Imola and Ravenna. But when his candidacy proved successful in Ravenna—thanks to the suffrage reform of January 1882 and republican support—the former anarchist from Imola had to decide whether he should forsake his parliamentary seat by declining the obligatory oath, as many followers expected him to do, or swear loyalty to the crown and enter the Chamber of Deputies as the first man to be elected in Italy on a socialist platform.⁴¹

Although his intention to swear the oath and claim his seat in parliament, regardless of the repercussions, cannot be doubted, the shrewd Costa knew that such a step would precipitate new controversy over the seriousness of his commitment to the revolution. If Costa could obtain the imprimatur of someone whose revolutionary credentials and commitment were beyond challenge, general approval of his controversial behavior would be secured. For support at this critical moment, Costa turned to Cafiero, whose own crisis and metamorphosis had resulted abruptly in his acceptance of socialist representation in parliament. Cafiero's response to Costa's request for "advice" was unhesitating: "Go to Parliament, frankly take your oath, and serve the common cause."⁴² Costa swore the oath.⁴³

CONSEQUENCES OF COSTA'S SVOLTA

Costa's defection constituted a major disaster for the anarchist movement. Besides providing an enormous boost to legalitarian socialism, it created widespread dissension and internecine struggle that sapped the movement of vital energy needed to recover from government repression and resume the struggle. Even worse, Costa's defection—in combination with fear of persecution—precipitated an antiauthoritarian reaction that generated a phobic aversion to leadership and organization, such as that already manifested by extremists like Cafiero.

⁴¹ Costa was not, as frequently claimed, Italy's first socialist deputy. This honor belonged to Giuseppe Fanelli and Saverio Friscia. However, they were elected on a democratic rather than a socialist ticket.

⁴² Cafiero to Costa, November 1, 1881, quoted in Masini, *Cafiero*, 330.

⁴³ Cerrito, *Costa*, 223–231; Gonzales, *Costa*, 213–229; Lipparini, *Costa*, 186–204. The suffrage reform of January 22, 1882, reduced the taxpaying qualification from forty to nineteen lire a year, the minimum age from twenty-five to twenty-one, and educational requirements to basic literacy. The result was an increase in the number of male voters from six hundred thousand to around two million, or 6.9 percent of the population. This increase effectively enfranchised the lower-middle and artisan classes and made possible the election of socialists to municipal and national office.

According to an astute analysis provided by Malatesta a decade later, the root of the problem could be traced back to the original International Workingmen's Association. He maintained that the International—despite rhetoric to the contrary and the battles fought for autonomy and liberty—had been born and remained authoritarian. The International from its inception imitated the organization of the state, with the General Council serving as its central government. General and regional congresses functioned as parliaments, wielding the power to admit or expel individuals or groups. Under Bakunin's leadership the anarchists revolted against this authoritarian structure. Yet the revolt had been directed more against Marx and Engels, who had sought to impose their program on the majority, than against the system itself. Even after the socialist world split and the Anti-Authoritarian International was founded in 1872, the guiding spirit of the new organization remained the same, with only a few men determining policy and molding opinion. Most militants lacked intellectual initiative, rarely studied, discussed, or evaluated ideas for themselves. They followed more or less unconsciously the will of the leaders. The only difference was that now the word "leader" was condemned and the decision makers were called "influential comrades." Such modifications suggested an awakening of consciousness and a realization of the need for autonomy, but they did not suffice to change the International's authoritarian character. "To become a socialist," said Malatesta, "did not signify, as it must, the undergoing of a profound moral revolution that awakens one to the immense potential of mankind and that elevates one above the present level of men."⁴⁴

Thus, according to Malatesta, when Costa defected and other influential leaders remained faithful to the old beliefs, utter confusion reigned among the Italian internationalists. The majority of the rank and file behaved like abandoned sheep, running about aimlessly, not knowing which way to go. Their main concern, Malatesta recalled, was to determine whether certain leaders had approved or disapproved the new formulas. Ultimately, the Italian internationalists divided and regrouped largely according to friendships and personal sympathies. A reaction against this state of affairs inevitably took hold, but the solution proved as pernicious as the disease. Many anarchists ceased to distinguish between authoritarianism and the principle of organization itself. In order to fight the former, they rejected the latter. As Malatesta put it:

They began to preach and to practice disorganization; they wanted to elevate isolation, disdain for obligations, and lack of solidarity into a principle, as if these were a function of the anarchist program, while instead they are its complete negation.

⁴⁴ For Malatesta's analysis of Costa's defection and antiorganizationism, see his article "I nostri propositi-II: L'Organizzazione," *L'Associazione* (London), December 7, 1889.

That is what happened to those who, in order to fight authority, attacked the principle of organization itself.

They wanted to prevent betrayals and deception, permit free rein to individual initiative, ensure against spies and attacks from the government—and they brought isolation and impotence to the fore”⁴⁵

The antiorganizationist reaction and continuing government repression—the latter constantly reinforcing the former—became the principal causes of the transformation and decline of Italian anarchism during the years immediately following Costa’s defection.

⁴⁵ Ibid. This last paragraph illustrates the relationship between antiorganizationism and fear of persecution, the importance of which Malatesta seriously understates.

CRISIS AND METAMORPHOSIS,
1879–1883

THE FACE OF DECLINE

When Costa published “To My Friends of the Romagna” in July 1879, Italian anarchism was already deep in crisis due primarily to government repression. Over the next several years, three factors combined to deepen the crisis and prevent its solution: the fear of persecution—even more intimidating now that the anarchists had been officially branded *malfattori*; the exile of key leaders, especially Cafiero and Malatesta, capable of energizing and leading; and the dissension and chaos caused by Costa’s apostasy. As a result of this prolonged crisis, the anarchist movement experienced a significant transformation and decline between 1879 and 1883, the most salient features of which were demoralization and general paralysis of activity, organizational disintegration, increasing isolation from the masses, and growing sectarianism and extremism in matters of ideology and tactics.

The pattern and extent of decline varied in different regions. The Romagna was unique because of Costa’s preeminence. None of the other anarchist chieftains—not even Cafiero or Malatesta—had developed a personal following among local leaders and militants in the manner of Costa, whose charisma, organizational skills, and personal ambition were unrivaled. That most of the Romagnole internationalists would follow Costa’s lead and embrace his political program was perhaps inevitable. The historian Guglielmo Ferrero, writing in 1893, made this pertinent observation:

Above all else, the Romagnoles are *personalisti*. They become interested in ideas through men; because, that is, those ideas were *spread* among them by some impressive and attractive personality. Behind the diffusion of an idea or a political party, here in the Romagna you will always find the popularity of a man.¹

Generalizations about Italian regional characteristics must never be accepted uncritically. Ferrero’s observation, however, lends credence to the arguments advanced by Malatesta and others that it was Costa’s personal

¹ Guglielmo Ferrero et al., *Il mondo criminale italiano* (Milan, 1893), 13, quoted in Gonzales, *Costa*, 177.

prestige, more than any objective evaluation of his ideas, that induced the majority of Romagna internationalists to abandon anarchism and join the PSRR.

Had some dynamic chieftain, like Malatesta, been available to resist Costa within the Romagna itself, rather than just attack him in the press as others did, it is conceivable that anarchist losses in this region would have been fewer. But not even Malatesta could have defeated Costa and his able lieutenants outright in their own territory. As it was, the anarchist opposition in the Romagna, led by Valbonesi in Forlìmpoli, generated appreciable resistance to Costa's program right up to the Rimini congress of July 24, 1881, but the publication of Cafiero's violent attack in *Il Grido del Popolo* three days earlier outraged Costa's followers and consolidated their support for the PSRR.²

Precisely how many anarchists in the Romagna defected to Costa long-term cannot be ascertained. Costa's party had an official membership of some four to five thousand at its peak in 1884, although as many as half of the internationalists who joined originally may have quit the PSRR by that date, having concluded that Costa's program was moderate, not revolutionary.³ In any case, the anarchist movement in the Romagna was dealt a double blow by Costa's defection: first, by the loss of local leaders and rank and file who followed their duce into the PSRR; second, by the negative tendencies that developed among the remaining faithful in reaction to Costa's apostasy and the mass desertion of former comrades. Luckily for the movement, Costa's influence elsewhere in Italy was not as commanding as it was in the Romagna.

In Tuscany, where the mass trials of 1879 had convicted more anarchists than anywhere else, the movement remained in the doldrums throughout 1880. Although the old Tuscan Federation, with sections in Pisa, Florence, Livorno, Carrara, the Maremma, and other localities, reconstituted itself that April, efforts to convene a regional congress never bore fruit.⁴ Several leading internationalists in Florence were too disenchanted (or intimidated) by recent events to resume their activities. Pezzi, released from jail after fifteen months, explained to Costa and Kulisciov that he, Natta, and Minguzzi

no longer concern ourselves *actively* with anything . . . because we find that things in Italy have so changed, or better said, are so monopolized by the whim of a few, that for the moment, rather than provoke dissension and friction

² Gonzales, *Costa*, 248–251.

³ *Ibid.*, 195–196.

⁴ Florence police chief's special report, "Anarchismo e socialismo in Firenze dal 1880 al 1895," June 15, 1895, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 279–286.

among socialists, we think it better and more useful to remain simple observers.⁵

By the end of the year, the police chief reported that the International in Florence "continues to survive without organization or discipline, without holding meetings, and without exercising any influence over the popular masses."⁶ Mounting unemployment and continuing police harassment contributed to the stagnation of the Florentine movement, and to escape these conditions at least one hundred local anarchists emigrated to France, Egypt, and South America between 1881 and 1885.⁷

FRANCESCO SAVERIO MERLINO

Naples experienced a revival as an anarchist center in the early 1880s, primarily due to the influence of Francesco Saverio Merlino, who became the movement's leading intellectual and theorist. Merlino was born in Naples on September 15, 1856, the son of a magistrate who served on the Bourbons' high criminal court. Although Merlino's father remained on the bench under the Savoyards, his past service was held against him despite his moderate views. Frequent transfer to undesirable assignments far from his family caused him to retire prematurely. Merlino recalled that "the first impression I had of the injustice of Governments was the wicked persecution of my father."⁸ In spite of this, Merlino studied law, receiving his degree from the University of Naples at the age of twenty-one.

Prefectural reports described Merlino as short and slender, with black hair and mustache, pallid complexion, and an intelligent face. Indeed, brilliant and able, Merlino could have had a successful legal career—as did his two brothers (one became a state prosecutor in Bari, the other a practicing attorney)—if he had not chosen to become involved in the internationalist movement. Although he had embraced anarchism earlier, Merlino's militancy was kindled by the Matese insurrection, and his key involvement with the defense and trial accelerated his emergence as an important figure. The authorities noted that after the Matese trial, "because of his character, youthful enthusiasm, structured and broad learning, Merlino soon became the head of the anarchist-internationalists of Naples," conducting most of

⁵ Pezzi to Costa and Kulisciov, April 19, 1880, in Masini, "Lettere inedite di anarchici e socialisti," 61.

⁶ Florence police chief's report, December 31, 1880, quoted in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 237.

⁷ Florence prefect's report, July 29, 1885, *ibid.*, 238.

⁸ Francesco Saverio Merlino, "Introduzione (Ricordi personali)," *Politica e Magistratura*, 249.

the propaganda work in the city and province, and corresponding with other anarchist groups throughout the country and abroad.⁹

Now a target, Merlino was arrested in Naples on November 10, 1878, and held in custody for several months on charges of inciting revolt. Absolved for lack of evidence, he served another stint in jail before a second acquittal in Lucera on August 4, 1879. He went on to successfully defend Giovanni Domanico and Giuseppe Fasoli, two Calabrese anarchists tried for establishing an internationalist section in Rocca Imperiale. In Naples that September, Merlino began publishing *Il Movimento Sociale*, which survived for ten issues before being suppressed by the police. During this period, in collaboration with *La Plebe*, he published pamphlets on Vincenzo Russo, a martyred Neapolitan leader of the Parthenopean Republic of 1799, and the anarchist precursor Carlo Pisacane. Merlino also served as a defense attorney at the Florence trial of Natta, Pezzi, Kulisciov, and their colleagues, at which time he also met Costa. In February 1881, after surviving another attempt to send him to prison, Merlino assumed the coeditorship of *Il Grido del Popolo* in Naples, a newspaper that became the strongest voice of anarchism in Italy and Costa's principal critic.¹⁰

THE CHIASSO CONGRESS

Neither Merlino nor Costa, however, attended the socialist congress held in Chiasso, Switzerland, on December 5–6, 1880. Officially the third congress of the Federation of Upper Italy, the meeting had been convened by the socialists of the *Plebe* group in the hope of converting the survivors of the anarchist International to their program. Most of the eighteen or nineteen delegates who attended came from the exile community in Lugano. Among the anarchists were Cafiero, Grassi, Matteucci, Monticelli, and Egisto Marzoli. Zanardelli and Nabruzzi, the renegade Bakuninists who

⁹ Naples prefect's report, May 26, 1896, in Pier Carlo Masini, "Biografie di 'sovversivi' compilate dai prefetti del Regno d'Italia," *Rivista Storica del Socialismo* 4, nos. 13–14 (May–December 1961): 590–597.

¹⁰ Merlino still awaits his biographer. In addition to the prefectural report and Merlino's own recollections cited above, see the following studies for his life and career: Max Nettlau, *Saverio Merlino* (Montevideo, 1948); Masini, *Internazionalisti*, 122–123, and *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 174–176; Aldo Venturini, "Schizzo biografico-teorico di Saverio Merlino," in Merlino, *Revisione del Marxismo: Lineamenti di un socialismo integrale* (Bologna, 1945), 1–15; Aldo Venturini and Pier Carlo Masini's preface to Merlino, *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario* (Florence, 1957), vii–xxx; Franco Della Peruta's preface to Merlino, *Questa è l'Italia* (Milan, 1953), v–viii; Nicola Tranfaglia's introduction to Merlino, *L'Italia qual è*, 11–36; Galizia, "Il socialismo giuridico di Francesco Saverio Merlino," 1:531–634; Emilio R. Papa, *Per una biografia intellettuale di F. S. Merlino: Giustizia e sociologia criminale dal "socialismo anarchico" al "riformismo rivoluzionario" (1878–1930)* (Milan, 1982); Landi, "Malatesta e Merlino dalla prima internazionale," 121–156. For Merlino's journalistic activities at this time, see Buccellato and Iaccio, *Anarchici nell'Italia meridionale*, 314–317.

had founded the Ceresio section in Lugano, sided with their old comrades. The *Plebe* group was represented by Bignami, Gnocchi-Viani, and Giuseppe Croce, while other socialists included the Lombard journalist Paolo Valera, the poet Pompeo Bettini, and the painter Cesare Durio.¹¹

The anarchists and the evolutionary socialists, despite their polemics, were really closer in matters of principle than either would have admitted. Thus, at Chiasso, while they disagreed about collectivism as an intermediary stage, they unanimously endorsed anarchist communism as the ultimate goal. As for tactics, despite Gnocchi-Viani's three-hour speech favoring socialist and worker participation in parliamentary and municipal elections as a means of propaganda, the abstentionist views of the anarchists prevailed. The congress rejected socialist and worker candidacies and approved agitation for universal suffrage only as a vehicle for socialist propaganda. On the issue of improving the economic condition of workers, the congress condemned all institutions and reforms—mutual aid societies, salary increases, reduction of work hours—that did not seek the emancipation of labor from capital.¹²

Since the anarchists dominated the proceedings and their intransigent positions generally prevailed, Chiasso has been considered the last congress of the Italian International. Yet their victory at Chiasso failed to strengthen the movement. On the contrary, by encouraging them to interpret the congress as a defeat for Costa and the *Plebe* group, Chiasso lulled the anarchists into underestimating the influence of their rivals.¹³ Chiasso did not weaken the legalitarian cause. The *Plebe* group reconstituted their northern federation under a new name, the Federazione Socialista dell'Alta Italia, and Costa went on to found the PSRR later that year. Despite their common ends and the comradeship demonstrated during the proceedings, anarchists and legalitarians were now too far apart to reunite.¹⁴

CIPRIANI'S CALL TO ARMS

At Chiasso, Zanardelli had read a manifesto entitled "To the Oppressed of Italy," calling for a truce between socialist factions and for the formation of a "great party of the revolution" to carry out an insurrection in Italy.¹⁵ Written by Zanardelli, Nabruzzi, and Giovanni Zirardini in Paris, the manifesto

¹¹ Valiani, *Storia del movimento socialista*, 1:236; Roberto Michels, *Storia del Marxismo in Italia: Compendio critico* (Rome, 1909), 36–37.

¹² *La Plebe* (Milan), December 12, 1880; *Le Révolté* (Geneva), December 11, 1880; *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), December 24, 1880.

¹³ See their comments in *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), December 24, 1880.

¹⁴ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 161–162; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 181.

¹⁵ Published in *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), December 24, 1880.

had been inspired by the legendary Amilcare Cipriani. Although allied with the anarchists at various times during the 1880s and 1890s, Cipriani was a Garibaldian at heart who believed that all revolutionary movements should unite against the common enemy. Born in Anzio but raised in Rimini, Cipriani volunteered for the war against Austria in 1859 at age fifteen. He subsequently deserted the Piedmontese army to join Garibaldi's Sicilian campaign in 1860. Reinstated into the army, he deserted again to fight alongside Garibaldi at Aspromonte in 1862, in the Trentino in 1866, and in the Vosges in 1870. He served also as a colonel on the revolutionary general staff of the Paris Commune, a role that secured his reputation as a hero among Italian socialist workers. Cipriani spent eight years in the penal colony at New Caledonia before the amnesty of 1880 enabled him to return to Paris. There he met Zanardelli, Nabruzzi, and other Italian exiles and began planning an insurrection.¹⁶

According to police reports, Cipriani obtained the support of revolutionary clubs in Paris, Marseilles, and London, and was organizing ex-Communards into an attack force that would descend upon Italy, targeting the Romagna and Tuscany. They were to be joined by Russian "nihilists" from Switzerland led by Kropotkin. Cafiero was expected to provide weapons, ammunition, and dynamite, and to lead the expedition together with Malatesta. The insurrection was to be precipitated by acts of arson and the assassination of public officials.¹⁷

In reality, of course, the scheme described in police reports had been devised by paid informants with creative imaginations. Although sympathetic toward Cipriani and receptive to an insurrectionary undertaking, the anarchists would not have supported any plan in which Zanardelli played a role. Malatesta explained to Cipriani that choosing Zanardelli as his emissary had "completely compromised the outcome of your noble initiative," since "there is not a single man of action, a single serious man in Italy, whether anarchist or humanitarian, Garibaldian or Mazzinian, who, knowing Zanardelli personally or by reputation, will take his proposals seriously for a single instant."¹⁸ In fact, Zanardelli's preparatory mission, conducted in Milan and Turin, resulted only in the arrest of the anarchists whom he approached. Because of this incident, Zanardelli was later accused of being

¹⁶ For biographical information on Cipriani, see Vittorio Emiliani, *Gli anarchici: Vite di Cafiero, Costa, Malatesta, Cipriani, Gori, Berneri, Borgbi* (Milan, 1973), 113–144; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 195–201; L. Casali, "Amilcare Cipriani," in *Il movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 1:48–51.

¹⁷ Confidential circular from the Ministry of the Interior, December 19, 1880, and the Florence police chief's reports of January 9 and February 28, 1881, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 237n. 2.

¹⁸ Malatesta to Cipriani, [December 1880], in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 428.

an agent provocateur by the anarchist newspaper *Tito Vezio* of Milan, whereupon he withdrew from the socialist movement and devoted himself to the study of philology in Brussels.¹⁹

Cipriani, meanwhile, had been expelled from France on New Year's Day and went to Lugano to enlist Cafiero's aid. The two revolutionaries journeyed to Rome to attend a meeting on universal suffrage organized by radical democrats for January 28, 1881. When the democrats discovered that Cipriani and Cafiero hoped to transform the pro-suffrage agitation into an uprising against the monarchy, they postponed the meeting. Cafiero and Cipriani, disappointed that the democrats intended only peaceful agitation, issued a public protest and left Rome. Cafiero eluded the police and returned to Lugano, but Cipriani made the mistake of visiting his sick father in Rimini, where he was arrested. When Grassi and Marzoli returned to Italy to explore what could be done without Cipriani, they found the anarchists too weak to mount an uprising.²⁰

The Italian government, however, was determined to prevent any insurrectionary initiative that Cipriani might plan in the future. Accordingly, he was tried and condemned for the killing of an Italian national in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1867, an act previously judged to have been committed in self defense. Sentenced to twenty-five years, Cipriani was imprisoned at Portolongone, where he suffered terrible treatment from prison officials and became Italy's greatest symbol of government victimization. For the next six years, anarchists, socialists, democrats, progressives, and intellectuals of every stamp fought for his liberation. But the loss of Cipriani during this period deprived the anarchist movement of a revolutionary leader who commanded significant popular support, especially in the Romagna.²¹

ACTION

Since organizational weakness and ideological extremism were fast becoming a function of each other, it was not surprising that just when the movement was least capable of undertaking direct action, appeals for violence were most heard. These appeals were issued from anarchists who represented a new breed, or, more precisely, from veteran anarchists who had become intractable extremists, transformed spiritually and intellectually by the persecution, defeat, and disillusionment they had suffered. In their anger and frustration, perceiving themselves to be at war not only with the

¹⁹ Mariella Nejrotti, "Tito Zanardelli," in *Il movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 4:266–271.

²⁰ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), February 5, 1881; Florence police chief's report, March 7, 1881, in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 237n. 3; Masini, *Cafiero*, 300–302.

²¹ Emiliani, *Anarchici*, 129–134; Casali, "Amilcare Cipriani," 50.

state but with the whole of society, these anarchists became apostles of violence.²²

A prime example of this “new” breed of anarchist was Emilio Covelli. Publishing a newspaper in Geneva aptly titled *I Malfattori*, Covelli formulated a revolutionary theory exalting the spostatati and the malfattori.²³ Covelli’s spostatati and malfattori, however, were not revolutionaries from the middle class who had declassed themselves to fight on behalf of the masses; they were the true outcasts of society—outlaws, the dispossessed, rebels of every sort. The entire army of the revolution, Covelli explained, consisted of the working class, the petite bourgeoisie, and the malfattori. But while the workers struggled for the economic revolution, and the petite bourgeoisie for the political revolution, it was the malfattori who fought for the moral revolution and therefore constituted the revolutionary elite:

The declassed, the *dangerous classes*, the *putrid precipitate* of the other social classes, the malefactors, who for individual or social reasons fight and cannot but fight for the moral revolution, are the last word of the social revolution, [they] are human liberty developing according to the necessity of its own nature.²⁴

In terms of its execution, Covelli had declared from London in November 1880 that “the revolution is the continuous action of exciting and perpetrating every kind of crime against public order.”²⁵

Another paragon of the new extremism was Carlo Cafiero, whose article “L’Action,” published in *Le Révolté* (Geneva) a month later, has aptly been described as a “manifesto of catastrophic and illegalist anarchism.”²⁶ Brandishing the *Testamento Politico* as the ultimate repository of revolutionary wisdom, Cafiero reformulated Pisacane’s famous dictum:

So it is action that we need, action and still more action. By engaging in action, we are working at the same time for the theory and practice of revolution [because] it is action that generates ideas and action again that sees to their propagation throughout the world.²⁷

²² Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 166–167.

²³ See Covelli’s articles “La questione sociale e i malfattori”; “I Malfattori”; “Siamo Malfattori”; and “Coi Malfattori,” in *I Malfattori* (Geneva), May 21, 28, June 4, 23, 1881. Also Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 167–168.

²⁴ “I Malfattori,” *I Malfattori* (Geneva), May 28, 1881.

²⁵ The leaflet “Redattori della Lotta!” (London), November 17, 1880, quoted in Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 167n. 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁷ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), December 25, 1880. Because Kropotkin was the editor of *Le Révolté*, many historians have mistakenly attributed the unsigned article to him. Cafiero’s authorship, however, is beyond question. According to Nettlau (*Malatesta*, 118–119), Cafiero did not consider *Le Révolté* to be revolutionary enough and dared Kropotkin to publish his article.

Cafiero categorically rejected electing socialists to parliament or to municipal councils as a legitimate form of action. Committed to violence and illegalism à outrance, he insisted:

Our action must be permanent revolt by the word, in writing, by the dagger, the rifle, dynamite, sometimes even by the ballot, when it comes to voting for Blanqui or Trinet who are ineligible. We . . . will use any weapon when it comes to striking as rebels. Everything is good for us that is not legal.²⁸

Cafiero scorned the notion that the anarchists must wait until their forces were sufficiently strong before they initiated the fight. Action, in and of itself, would develop the anarchists' strength, much the way a gymnast strengthens his muscles by using them. Nor should the anarchists wait until the masses shared their ideals before acting. Only a small minority would ever attain a clear vision of the revolution. If, in order to participate in the struggle, the anarchists waited for the revolution to present itself in the manner they had conceived in their hearts, they would wait forever. Cafiero believed that every popular movement already had within itself the seeds of revolutionary socialism; therefore, the anarchists must participate and help its growth. "Above all," he declared, "wherever one smells revolt and gunpowder, there we must be. . . . the people carry the living revolution in their entrails, and we must fight and die for them."²⁹ And finally, to the partisans of legal and parliamentary action, whom he knew would reproach the anarchists for their refusal to support the suffrage-reform movement, Cafiero reaffirmed that for the anarchists abstention from politics was not abstention from the revolution: "*We refuse to participate in parliamentary action, legal and reactionary, because we are devoted to the violent and anarchist revolution, the true revolution of the rabble and the barefooted tramps.*"³⁰

In essence, Cafiero and Covelli were articulating a post-International approach to revolutionary activity, in which small groups—each functioning autonomously as a clandestine cell but united by their single-minded purpose of violence against the established order—would undertake continuous guerrilla warfare and terrorist acts against persons and property. In the past, Italian anarchists had never eschewed individual or group acts of violence. On the contrary, attentats such as Agesilao Milano's attempted assassination of the Bourbon King Ferdinando II and Felice Orsini's attempt on the life of Emperor Louis Napoleon, were part of the venerated revolutionary tradition they had inherited from radical democracy.³¹ Ker-

²⁸ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), December 25, 1880.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* The ideas expressed in "L'Action" were further developed in a series of articles for *La Révolution Sociale* (Paris) in 1881. They are reproduced in Cafiero, *Rivoluzione per la rivoluzione*, 65–92.

³¹ Malatesta to Borghi, in Borghi, *Mezzo secolo di anarchia*, 267.

osene and dynamite—the former associated with the “pétroleuses” of the Paris Commune, the latter with the bombings of 1878—were embraced by the Italian International as revolutionary symbols and were celebrated in poetry and song. Groups and newspapers frequently adopted names like “Il Petrolio” and “La Dinamite” as a way of expressing their sanction of violence.³² Nevertheless, from the Rimini congress to the trial of the Banda del Matese and even beyond, so long as the International retained some semblance of organization and viability, revolutionary theory and practice had always emphasized insurrectionism. Terrorism remained a comparatively rare phenomenon among the Italian anarchists. Not a single assassination of an important personage can be attributed to them throughout this period, and only by the end of 1878, in Florence and Pisa, did bombs figure seriously into their activities—that is, if these attentats were indeed committed by internationalists rather than the police or others. Assuming anarchists were responsible, the bombings constituted acts of spontaneous retaliation against government repression rather than a new revolutionary strategy based on an ideology of terrorism.

By 1880–1881, however, advocacy of terrorism as the preferred revolutionary strategy became commonplace in many anarchist circles, especially among exiles who had suffered the most from persecution and who were distraught over recent events in Italy, above all the failure of the masses to revolt. Acts of individual or clandestine group violence now seemed the only option available, the only alternative to complete impotence. Malatesta and Merlino, who never favored terrorism and censured it in the 1890s, did not oppose the shift in revolutionary strategy at this time, at least not publically. Thus the movement lacked an effective counterpoise to the new extremism. And before any serious challenge to the Cafiero-Covelli ideology of illegalist action could develop, a dramatic event virtually assured that terrorism would become passionately endorsed by most anarchists in Italy and the rest of Europe.

THE ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER II

On March 1, 1881, Czar Alexander II was killed in St. Petersburg by the bombs of a revolutionary populist group calling itself the *Narodnaya Volya* (The People's Will). That the assassination succeeded only in unleashing a storm of government terror against the populists, and in replacing a conservative czar with a reactionary successor, was lost on the anarchists of western and central Europe. For them, the deed had an exhilarating effect,

³² Pier Carlo Masini, “I canti della Prima Internazionale in Italia: Alcune aggiunte alle prime ricerche di Gianni Bosio,” *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 11, nos. 3–4 (July–December 1965): 181–185.

strengthening their delusion that revolution could be stimulated by terrorism. In Italy, as elsewhere, anarchists were hypnotized by the image of the Czar of all the Russias, the supreme autocrat of the most reactionary state in Europe, having been struck down by the arm of the Revolution. The killing of Alexander II—the man “who promised liberty and gave slavery”—was regarded as an act of justice by *Il Grido del Popolo*.³³ Covelli heralded the deed as a “triumph of the revolutionary party” and predicted that Alexander III would share the fate of his father, now that cries of “Down with the tyrant!” and “Down with the exploiters!” were reportedly being heard throughout Russia in response to the populists’ deed.³⁴ Felicò was convinced that the martyrdom (“The Orgy of Blood”) of Sophie Perovskaya and four other comrades executed for the assassination would produce violent repercussions in the west: “The sound of that drum—I seem to hear it from a distance of a thousand leagues—is very lugubrious, and it says to the revolutionary socialists of all the world: Death to the executioners of the People! Blood!, Blood!, Blood!”³⁵

The Italian anarchist who proved most susceptible to the myth of the Narodnaya Volya was Cafiero. He mistakenly assumed that the Russian terrorists were organized in secret, independent circles, linked together only by their common objective. This manner of revolutionary organization, in Cafiero’s view, was a validation of Pisacane’s dictum: “Conspire and plot without idols, without masters, without anyone claiming to command and anyone yielding to obey.”³⁶ And the success of the Russians’ terrorist tactics, he believed, had demonstrated the superiority of small, secret, independent cells (“open order”) over that of a well-organized, public, mass party (“close order”) like that of the German social democrats. Otto von Bismarck, he claimed, had shattered the close order of the social democrats with his antisocialist legislation of 1878, whereas the Romanovs had failed to stop the open order of the Narodnaya Volya even with the most ferocious persecution. Only the open order, therefore, could successfully resist and combat a powerful state.³⁷

In reality, the Narodnaya Volya was far from the Pisacanian model of libertarian revolutionary organization that Cafiero imagined. The Russian terrorists belonged to a highly disciplined and hierarchical organization, led by a central executive committee, with strong leaders such as Sophie Perovskaya and Andrei Ivanovich Zhelyabov. Its populist program of constitutional reform, moreover, was far from compatible with anarchist ideals and

³³ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), March 14, 27, April 17, 1881.

³⁴ *I Malfattori* (Geneva), May 21 and 28, 1881.

³⁵ *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), April 24, 1881.

³⁶ Letter of June 27, 1881, *ibid.*, July 4, 1881.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

objectives. In fact, the Russian anarchists opposed the Narodnaya Volya because it possessed the same authoritarian tendencies that their comrades were rebelling against in the west.³⁸

Cafiero, in the last analysis, had attributed to the Russian terrorists the very characteristics he desired to see embodied in the Italian anarchist movement. His advice to his comrades left no doubt of this:

Against the centralized, disciplined and disciplining, autocratic and despotic state, we must oppose a decentralized, antiauthoritarian and free force. . . .

No more centers, therefore; no more offices for correspondence or for statistics; no more general plans previously arranged. Let each man in his own locality seek to form a group around himself, to constitute a maniple that pledges action without fail.

Ten men, six men, can accomplish deeds in a city that will find an echo in all the world.³⁹

Cafiero's vision of the anarchist movement, atomized into small, clandestine cells devoted to terrorism, was only partly realized. Italian anarchism in 1881 was well on its way to becoming atomized, as both leaders and rank and file rejected centers, correspondence commissions, general plans, and a host of other activities associated with organization—all in the name of antiauthoritarianism and free initiative. What did not materialize was the continuous wave of violent acts that Cafiero had invoked. This apostle of violence—himself the most gentle of men—found a large audience of anarchists sympathetic to his theory of permanent revolt, but few were willing to practice it. Permanent revolt never became a program of action for Italian anarchism in the 1880s—it was a state of mind, offering psychological sustenance to intransigent rebels locked spiritually and morally in unequal combat with the state and bourgeois society.

"A RELIABLE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION"

Although there had been no official announcement of its demise, most Italian anarchists believed with Covelli that "the International no longer exists, either as a Marxist association or as a Bakuninst sect."⁴⁰ By the summer of 1881, however, efforts were under way in London to convene an international congress that would unite all revolutionary socialist forces—

³⁸ On the Narodnaya Volya, see Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 633–720; Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 411–412; Astrid von Borcke, "Violence and Terror in Russian Revolutionary Populism: the Narodnaya Volya, 1879–1883," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, eds., *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York, 1982), 48–62.

³⁹ Letter of June 28, 1881, in *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), July 4, 1881.

⁴⁰ *La Plebe* (Milan), July 27, 1879.

excluding the Marxists—into one organization, either the old International reconstituted or a new association adapted to contemporary conditions. Malatesta, who had arrived in London in March 1881, after his expulsion from more than a half-dozen countries since 1878, joined the organizing committee. He urged his Italian comrades to rally support for the congress, believing that, from the campaign to organize a new International, the Italians might derive the impetus to create a “reliable national organization.”⁴¹

Malatesta did not share the movement’s growing paranoia about organization, and was destined to find himself at odds with many old comrades for whom a reliable national organization represented an authoritarian menace. Strong opposition to Malatesta’s proposal was voiced even before the London congress convened. Felicò in Naples inveighed against “leaders,” “investitures,” “loyalty oaths,” and all the other trappings of national organization, on the grounds that they would jeopardize autonomy and freedom of action.⁴² Matteucci in Egypt expressed concern that a new organization constituted without a specific objective would “fall into the errors of old.” The weakness of the International, he explained, had derived from the fact that many of its sections had included disparate elements divided by lack of uniform opinion and purpose. What proponents of another workers’ organization really wanted, he feared, was an instrument for electoral agitation and reform rather than revolution. The only organization sanctionable in his view was spontaneous, “anarchist” organization. “Let us organize ourselves,” Matteucci declared, “but before constituting even the smallest group, let us determine the purpose of this group, and let us gather together *only* those individuals *necessary* for *action* to realize that purpose.” Specific tasks for which groups would organize included violent deeds and the publication of clandestine literature.⁴³ Typical of the emerging current of *anti-organizzatori*, Matteucci envisioned a movement in which anarchists would remain aloof from the unconverted masses, associating only with other anarchists, and constituting a revolutionary elite uncontaminated by the authoritarianism and reformism supposedly inherent in any formal, large-scale organization.

THE LONDON CONGRESS

Before the London congress convened, the survivors of a secret international group of anarchist leaders—known to its members as the Intimate International—began to strategize. Formed at La Chaux-de-Fonds (Jura)

⁴¹ Malatesta’s letter of April 25, 1881, in *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), May 8, 1881.

⁴² Ibid., April 24, 1881.

⁴³ Letter of July 13, 1881, *ibid.*, August 3, 1881.

in August or September 1877, the Intimate International was the last descendant of Bakunin's Secret Alliance of 1872, which was itself the continuation of his earlier International Brotherhood. Originally comprising about ten members, the Intimate International had been reduced to five by 1881: Malatesta, Cafiero, Schwitzguébel, Pindy, and Kropotkin, who served as correspondence secretary.⁴⁴

Kropotkin initiated discussion with a letter to his comrades insisting that the Intimate International agree in advance on the kind of organization they wanted to create at the London congress. He proposed a dual organization structured along Bakuninist lines: the one, large-scale and functioning publicly; the other, secret and geared for direct action. Malatesta endorsed Kropotkin's idea of reestablishing an International as a dual institution, but proposed that it also encompass a third organization—an international revolutionary league. Schwitzguébel expressed his preference for Malatesta's approach over Kropotkin's but offered no assistance. Pindy professed himself too pessimistic to do anything save wait for a spontaneous movement of the people to rouse him from his torpor. Far more discouraging, however, was Cafiero's aloofness and disdain.⁴⁵

When first informed of the plans to reconstitute the International, Cafiero declared publicly that the London congress had only one question to decide: "In what manner will we organize the violence."⁴⁶ To his comrades in the Intimate International, however, he stated that "the organization or conspiracy that you propose cannot endure. It will lead to nothing and you will have lost time needlessly. You do not have any money, nor the slightest possibility of obtaining any; therefore, no conspiracy is possible." Rather than participate in their "classical conspiracy," Cafiero expressed his desire to disappear into an isolated cell of revolutionaries and await the apocalypse:

Our salvation lies in anarchism. In order to make ourselves impalpable and imponderable, we must become atomized. We must no longer write to each other except to say good-day and good-evening. You will see that they [the

⁴⁴ On the Intimate International, see Max Nettlau, "Kropotkin, Malatesta e il congresso internazionale socialista rivoluzionario di Londra del 1881 (con lettere inedite di Kropotkin, Malatesta e Cafiero)," in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), December 4, 1933. Other members of the original group included James Guillaume, Paul Brousse, José García Viñas, Tomás González Morago, and Andrea Costa. By 1881, Costa and Brousse had defected, Guillaume was in virtual retirement, and Viñas had withdrawn from the group.

⁴⁵ Kropotkin's circulating letter (undated), together with those from Malatesta, Cafiero, Schwitzguébel, and Pindy, was published in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), December 4, 1933; April 21, 1934; May 16, 1934; and June 23, 1934. Nettlau collected these rare letters with Malatesta's assistance, and refers to them in his *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, 226–231. For a more detailed account of the Kropotkin-Malatesta exchange, see Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872–1886* (Cambridge, 1989), 145–151.

⁴⁶ Letter of June 27, 1881, in *Il Grido del Popolo* (Naples), July 4, 1881.

police] will not take the trouble to hold back our letters. . . . Do not count on me for your conspiracy. Do not write to me about it, and take note that, henceforth, I will be the apostle of the *cell*. My every dream is to find and create one in which I can immerse myself and disappear until the Last Judgment.⁴⁷

With only Kropotkin and Malatesta interested in contributing to the reconstitution of the International, the Intimate International exerted no influence on the London congress and ceased to exist even as a corresponding body. If Cafiero had attended, however, his blueprint for an atomized movement relying on terrorism would have been enthusiastically received. Anarchists throughout Europe had experienced much the same adversity that had transformed the Italian movement and were reacting in similar fashion: fear of persecution, exaggerated response to defecting or inactive leaders (Brousse in France and Guillaume in the Jura), and disillusionment over the advances made by legalitarian socialism. Except for Spain, the large national federations comprising workers' associations had disintegrated or become inactive. What remained was an amorphous collection of small groups bound only by their ideals and a common dread of organization. Disenchantment with the working classes for failing to revolt had also become widespread among anarchists by this time. So rather than continue hoping for popular upheavals, they vested their faith in the attentat—dynamite and the dagger would surely shake the existing order. Given these conditions and attitudes, therefore, the likelihood that the London congress could resurrect a large-scale, public organization based on workers' associations was nil.⁴⁸

Some forty-five delegates, claiming to represent fifty thousand members, sixty federations (existing mainly on paper), and fifty-nine individual groups, met in Charrington Street, London, from July 14 to 20, 1881. Several of anarchism's most distinguished figures were present: Malatesta, Merlino, Kropotkin, Louise Michel, Emile Gautier, Nicholas Chaikovsky, Johann Neve, and Joseph Peukert. The three ideological currents of the movement in Europe and the United States were represented: anarchist communists, anarchist collectivists, and individualists. At least one spy, the notorious Serreaux, was an active participant and unofficial spokesman for the movement's terrorist wing.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Letter of June 26, 1881, quoted in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), May 16, 1934.

⁴⁸ Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 154–156.

⁴⁹ The most important sources for the London congress are anarchist newspapers: *Le Révolté* (Geneva), *Freiheit* (London), and *La Révolution Sociale* (Paris). I have used *Le Révolté*. For secondary accounts, see Stekloff, *First International*, 349–362; Valiani, *Questioni di storia del socialismo*, 197–207; and above all Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, 177–231. The delegates to the London congress were identified in the anarchist press only by number. With the help of Kropotkin and documents furnished by Gustave Brocher, Nettlau (*ibid.*, 187–201) was able to attach names to the numbers. Stekloff's otherwise accurate account (*First International*, 433n. 368) confuses Malatesta (delegate no. 25) and Merlino (no. 26).

The early sessions were devoted to reports on the various movements, discussions on whether the International should be reorganized around workers' associations, and whether political struggle against the state or economic struggle against capitalism should take priority. These sessions were dominated by Kropotkin, Malatesta, Merlino, and the few others genuinely interested in developing the International as a revolutionary force. The other delegates, while paying lip service to revolutionary objectives, were concerned primarily with denying the International any institutional means by which to threaten the autonomy of local groups and individuals. The memory of Marx manipulating the London General Council as an instrument for his own authoritarian policies was burned deeply into the collective consciousness of the anarchist movement. The London delegates went no further, therefore, than to establish an international mailbox: a correspondence committee composed of Malatesta, Kropotkin's friend Nicholas Chaikovsky, and Sebastian Trunk of the London Freiheit group.⁵⁰

The intransigents at London proceeded next to the logical extreme of antiorganizationism—terrorism. Dr. Edward Nathan-Ganz, the delegate of the Confederation of Mexican Workers, insisted repeatedly that military academies should be established to train anarchists in the military sciences and chemistry. Kropotkin, although he sanctioned bombs as one means of struggle, countered that it was dangerous to create a military elite for popular revolution. He urged his comrades to concentrate instead on nonviolent propaganda among the masses.⁵¹ But the emotional appeal of terrorism proved irresistible to the delegates, who passed a resolution declaring:

Inasmuch as the technical and chemical sciences have already been of service to the revolutionary cause, and are capable of being even more serviceable in the future, the congress recommends that organizations and individuals belonging to the International Workingmen's Association pay special attention to the theory and practice of these sciences both for defensive and offensive purposes.⁵²

After officially endorsing terrorism and rejecting parliamentary activity, the delegates took up the last order of business, which was to reiterate the "federative pact" originally adopted at the Geneva congress of 1866 and amended at the Saint-Imier congress in 1872. An interminable debate ensued over how the word *morality* should be used.⁵³ This was entirely fitting: knit-picking over the words of a meaningless document symbolized the sectarian nature and self-defeating tendencies of the international anarchist

⁵⁰ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), July 23, August 6, 20, 1881; Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, 216.

⁵¹ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), August 20, 1881.

⁵² *Ibid.*, July 23, 1881.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

movement in the early 1880s. Preferring to remain hermetically sealed within their insular world, lest it become contaminated by authoritarianism, the anarchist delegates sacrificed the International on the altar of local autonomy and free initiative. The London congress thus ended with a burial, not a resurrection. Thereafter, the International lingered on the European stage merely as a sinister apparition, haunting politicians and policemen subject to nightmares about worldwide conspiracies.

MERLINO'S EFFORTS TO REORGANIZE

While Malatesta remained in London trying unsuccessfully to launch a newspaper, Merlino returned to Italy, where he labored indefatigably over the next two years to revive the movement in southern Italy. One of Merlino's focal points was Puglia, where his previous efforts to reconstitute the regional federation had failed. His explanation illustrates the obstacles that impeded the growth of anarchism in the south:

While the *workers* generally lack the organizing spirit and the capacity for such work, the nonworkers are little interested in our cause or encounter great difficulties because of the watchfulness of their families and the authorities, as well as the distances not yet surmounted in these provinces by good means of communication.⁵⁴

Merlino advised his Puglian contact, Antonio Murgo, to avoid the "old element," from which no help could be expected, and to work secretly and stealthily, penetrating workers' associations and winning the sympathy of new elements, in the provincial areas more than the cities. He insisted that they should not expect workers to accept their program immediately, "word for word, and comma for comma." "We must reverse the order of our propaganda," he advised, "otherwise we will only succeed in spreading alarm, fear, and uncertainty among these same workers." The anarchists should first advance the idea of worker solidarity and its importance for improving conditions. After gradual exposure to the anarchist ideas, the workers could be made to understand that "the only solution is that which we propose," and when strong bonds were established, the workers—as their brothers had recently done in Barcelona—should "join the International in mass."⁵⁵

In Naples, Merlino devoted himself to three tasks: check the advances being made by the legalitarian socialists led by Pietro Casilli; penetrate and organize the workers' associations; and overcome the resistance of the old

⁵⁴ Merlino to Antonio Murgo, October 24, 1881, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 438.

⁵⁵ Merlino to Murgo, December 11, 1881, *ibid.*, 439–440.

element. Contending with the bitter opposition of Felicò and the other intransigents on the staff of *Il Grido del Popolo* drove Merlino to despair. These Neapolitan anarchists were antiorganizationist and worker exclusivist in attitude. They deeply resented Merlino's intellectuality and leadership ability and did everything possible to sabotage his organization campaign in Naples. Merlino described his conflict with them:

For a good many years a struggle—veiled or open, but always bitter—has been going on here between me and the old elements. And before me this struggle was waged by *Covelli*, and before him by *Malatesta*. Malatesta, Covelli, and I, we find ourselves among impossible people. They do not work; they are incapable of taking the slightest initiative; however, they are invaded by a diabolical spirit of puerile envy and preach *war against the individual* [i.e., Merlino].

As soon as you have succeeded, who knows with how much effort, in organizing a certain number of workers, intending to do something serious, then you see them appear to sow the seeds of dissension, to divide, to demolish.⁵⁶

Obstructionism from "impossible people" such as Felicò would hamstring the organizational work of Merlino and Malatesta for years to come. In Naples, meanwhile, repeated confiscations caused the suspension of *Il Grido del Popolo* in November 1881. When the newspaper resumed publication in January 1882, a harried Merlino (he had been arrested and almost placed under *ammonizione* in December) withdrew as coeditor, further collaboration with the intransigents having become unendurable. On April 23, 1883, Merlino was arrested for conspiracy against the state and imprisoned until November 12. During Merlino's withdrawal and imprisonment, Felicò and Vincenzo Giustiniani, another worker exclusivist, regained control of the local movement. The resulting stagnation was so complete that the police chief reported in May 1883 that the local internationalists had not committed "a single public criminal act" or held "a single public meeting for propagandizing anarchist principles" for nearly two years.⁵⁷

THE LOSS OF CAFIERO

The efforts of Malatesta and Merlino to reconstitute the International in Italy came at a time when the anarchists were preoccupied with Costa and the legalitarians. The suffrage reform of February 1882 had transformed the issue of electoral tactics versus abstentionism from an abstraction into a

⁵⁶ Merlino to Murgo, May 19, 1882, *ibid.*, 448.

⁵⁷ Police chief's report, May 2, 1883, in Della Peruta's preface to Merlino, *Questa è l'Italia*, vii. Also Merlino to Murgo, December 11 and December (undated), 1881, February 8, May 19, 1882, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 440–442, 444–448; Nunzio Dell'Erba, *Le origini del socialismo a Napoli (1870–1892)* (Milan, 1979), 36–42.

reality. The prospect of even a single victory proved irresistible for many internationalists, especially in the Romagna and Lombardy, where Costa and the *Plebe* group campaigned vigorously in favor of electing socialist candidates. The last thing the anarchists needed at this juncture was for another important comrade to endorse parliamentary tactics and precipitate more defections. They were absolutely stunned, therefore, when word spread that Cafiero—of all people—had returned to Italy in March 1882, supporting the very methods he had previously condemned. Their fears were confirmed when *La Favilla* published Cafiero's explanation:

Today the party has definitely taken this new path; those like me, who disagreed with it, have adhered. . . . I submitted to the party, frankly and freely accepting its new line of conduct. . . . it is much better to take a single step with all the comrades on the real path of life than to remain isolated and to cover hundreds of leagues in the abstract.⁵⁸

That Cafiero, the apostle of permanent revolt, would have "submitted" to the will of the party and embraced the tactics of legalitarian socialism defied belief. "It is inadmissible that he has come to that," Pezzi insisted in a letter to Costa, for "to admit that, it would be necessary to believe that Carlo has gone crazy."⁵⁹ Pezzi's allusion to insanity reflected his knowledge that Cafiero had indeed been suffering intermittently from mental illness.⁶⁰

Always eccentric, Cafiero had exhibited strange, inexplicable behavior—suggesting incipient paranoia—as early as 1874. But he manifested overt signs of psychological imbalance during the summer of 1881. Police persecution, the hardships of exile, disillusionment over revolutionary failures, and the deep anguish caused by his break with Costa had all taken their toll on Cafiero's psyche, exacerbating the latent pathology. One eyewitness to his first breakdown recounted that one day, while a few comrades who shared quarters in Lugano were sitting around the table writing letters, Cafiero suddenly appeared and abruptly ordered them out of his house. Recovering his senses a few days later, Cafiero invited his comrades to return, welcoming them with hugs and kisses. He tried to explain his bizarre behavior:

I do not know what has been happening to me for some time. I can no longer continue this life, and I feel the need to escape and go far, far away where I can

⁵⁸ *La Favilla* (Mantua), April 9–10, 1882, quoted in Hostetter, *Italian Socialist Movement*, 429.

⁵⁹ Pezzi to Costa, April 7, 1882, in Gianni Bosio, "Lettere ad Andrea Costa e ad Anna Kuliscioff di Francesco Pezzi," *Movimento Operaio* 2, nos. 7–8 (April–May 1950): 198.

⁶⁰ For Cafiero's mental breakdown and its possible influence on his conversion to parliamentary socialism, see Masini, *Cafiero*, 305–349, and his "Carlo Cafiero ed una controversia intorno alla sua ultima posizione politica," *Volontà* 1, nos. 8–9 (March 1, 1947): 73–83. Masini's biography amends his earlier thesis that Cafiero's conversion derived mainly from mental illness. See also Lucarelli, *Cafiero*, 71–76; Damiani, *Cafiero*, 198–207.

meet men whose language no one understands. The society of men is no longer suited to me; I long only for isolation.⁶¹

Expelled from Switzerland in September 1881, Cafiero took refuge in London, where his mental state deteriorated rapidly. He immersed himself in study at the British Museum, rarely socializing with anyone except Malatesta, and then only infrequently because they lived far apart. During the winter of 1881–1882 Cafiero became overtly paranoid, eventually trusting only Malatesta. The latter recalled how his friend would interrupt conversations with other people and tell them that spies were posted outside his home. Prescient in his paranoia, Cafiero feared that the telephone, which had recently come into use, was an instrument through which the Italian authorities could overhear his conversations. Sometimes he would lead Malatesta to the middle of Hyde Park to avoid being overheard by spies and conversed only by whispering in his ear. At a lecture given by Elisée Reclus, he was warmly greeted by comrades who had not seen him for a long time, but he remained taciturn, whispering to Malatesta: “Don’t you see that they are all spies?” During moments of lucidity, Cafiero frequently displeased Kropotkin by professing his admiration for Marx, but the biggest shock to Malatesta and other comrades came when he proposed that they return with him to Italy to participate in the electoral agitation.

Gnocchi-Viani and Bignami had contacted Cafiero, requesting his assistance in the forthcoming election campaign, and he notified them that the example of German social democracy had persuaded him to cooperate. Malatesta’s dissuasion having failed, Cafiero settled in Milan at the end of March 1882 and began collaborating with the *Plebe* group. His letter to *La Favilla* publically confirmed his approval of electoral tactics.⁶²

The legalitarians were as thrilled by Cafiero’s conversion as the anarchists were horrified, but his active service in their camp was brief. The Italian police still considered Cafiero a dangerous anarchist and arrested him on April 5. As he had done nothing to justify detention, they placed him under ammonizione on April 13 for inciting “hatred among the different social classes, revolt against authority, etc.” Under interrogation, however, Cafiero demolished the case against him, declaring his intention to support the evolutionist program of electoral activity. He remained imprisoned while the authorities pondered their next step. Before they could do anything, however, Cafiero suffered a mental breakdown on May 2. He tried to commit suicide the following day by cutting a vein in his left hand, and examiners declared him mentally unbalanced.

When news of Cafiero’s condition spread, public opinion blamed the

⁶¹ The description quoting Cafiero was probably written by Gaetano Grassi. See the memorial published by *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), October 8, 1883.

⁶² Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 126–128; Masini, *Cafiero*, 314–315.

government for his insanity, and a national campaign to obtain his release was launched. The government found itself in a dilemma. Cafiero had committed no crime and could not be held in prison, but to institutionalize him in an asylum would bring charges of persecution. The government extricated itself by offering Cafiero a choice: residence in his hometown of Barletta under ammonizione or expulsion from the country. He chose the latter. On June 20 Cafiero was escorted across the border at Chiasso and left to fend for himself despite his pitiable state. Despondent and alone in a hotel room, Cafiero tried to commit suicide by cutting his throat with the broken glass of his spectacles. He recovered enough strength to describe his plight in a letter to Emilio Bellerio, who rushed to Chiasso and brought his old friend to Locarno, where he took him into his home.⁶³

Although tormented by fears that he had unwittingly revealed secrets to the Milan police during his breakdown, Cafiero slowly regained his intellectual faculties during the summer of 1882. But he remained apprehensive about his mental state, confiding to Malatesta that "if I did not have this accursed thing still in my brain I would be the most happy of mortals; I have never experienced greater calm, serenity and contentment as in this moment."⁶⁴ With the approach of the October 29 election, Cafiero, together with Covelli and Cipriani, was nominated as a protest candidate in several electoral colleges, but like Covelli, he refused to accept candidacy, preferring instead to support other comrades. He accepted the need for parliamentary representation, however, and when Costa emerged as socialism's only victor, Cafiero urged him to swear the loyalty oath and take his seat in parliament.⁶⁵

Little more was heard from Cafiero until February 6, 1883, when he abruptly vacated his lodging in Locarno and departed for Italy. Two days later he arrived at Fiesole, outside of Florence, where he rented a room. Clad only in a shirt, Cafiero left the hotel through a window and went wandering in the hills. He eventually took refuge in a cave where peasants found him standing with his feet in a puddle of water. He was hopelessly mad.⁶⁶ A fitting epitaph to Cafiero's life and career was furnished by his friend, Emilio Covelli, who would also end his tortured existence in an insane asylum: "You know the misfortune that struck our Carlo. Do you know why Cafiero is crazy? Because not knowing how to bend, he had to break."⁶⁷

⁶³ Masini, *Cafiero*, 319–324.

⁶⁴ Cafiero to Malatesta and Ceccarelli, July 27, 1882, in Della Peruta, *Democrazia e socialismo*, 420.

⁶⁵ Masini, *Cafiero*, 328–330.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 334–336.

⁶⁷ Quoted in a biographical portrait of Cafiero written by Emilio Zuccarini for *Humanitas* (Naples), May 29, 1887. See also Masini, "Carlo Cafiero ed una controversia intorno," 83. Judged insane, Cafiero remained institutionalized for the next four years despite persistent efforts to obtain his release. On November 16, 1887, his wife, Olympia Kutusov, who had

Because his mental deterioration coincided with his adoption of legalitarianism, the question raised then and later was whether Cafiero's "final" ideological position represented a genuine conversion to Marx's thesis on the conquest of political power or reflected a tormented spirit in the throes of psychological disintegration. Only interpreters seeking a facile rationalization of Cafiero's ideological transition can attribute his acceptance of electoral tactics solely to the effects of his psychosis. On the other hand, to disassociate Cafiero's conversion to legalitarianism completely from his psychological breakdown, and to accept his new political position at face value, as though it had evolved from rational considerations alone, is equally myopic. Cafiero's transition from anarchism to social democracy— notwithstanding his long interest in Marxism—took place essentially within some ten or twelve months, during which time his lucidity was frequently disrupted by psychotic episodes. That psychological catalysts played at least some role in his ideological and spiritual metamorphosis would therefore seem indisputable.

In any case, it could be argued that if Cafiero's mind had not been overwhelmed by the demons of paranoia, his intellect and mercurial spirit would not have remained satisfied with the realities of Italian social democracy in the 1880s. What can be said with certainty, however, is that the very tragedy surrounding Cafiero's embracing of legalitarian tactics spared the anarchist movement another internal crisis comparable to that produced by Costa's apostasy. Although dismayed by his conversion, Cafiero's friends believed with Malatesta that even "if his brain is sick, his heart is pure."⁶⁸

returned from Russia, secured his freedom and took care of him for more than a year before returning to her homeland. For the next year and a half, he resided in his hometown of Barletta, where comrades and a nephew looked after him. Although he experienced occasional periods of lucidity during these years, Cafiero never completely regained his sanity, and in 1891 he suffered a relapse and was again institutionalized. He died of tuberculosis on July 17, 1892, at the insane asylum in Nocera Inferiore. Masini, *Cafiero*, 333–367.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Masini, *Cafiero*, 326; original source not cited.

STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE,
1883–1885

MALATESTA CONFRONTS THE ANARCHIST DILEMMA

Cafiero's endorsement of political struggle by means of elections, and Costa's swearing the loyalty oath to enter parliament, are considered symbols of social democracy's eclipse of anarchism. That the former was now in ascendance and the latter in decline cannot be disputed. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the development of Italian socialism having turned out otherwise, given the conditions of the period. Even if not already weakened because of internal crisis and government repression, anarchism could not have retained a dominant position among competing schools of socialism once suffrage was extended to the lower-middle class, educated artisans, and a small segment of the proletariat in 1882.

For socialists disillusioned with anarchist methods, the prospect of building a mass party and ultimately conquering state power seemed much more feasible than before, as did the promise of economic and social reforms to workers and artisans desperate for a better life but reluctant to follow a revolutionary course. Nevertheless, the lure of these hypothetical gains did not suddenly attract legions of new followers to the legalitarian cause. The principal and immediate beneficiaries of the 1882 suffrage reform were the Republican and Radical parties, not the legalitarian socialists. The electoral fortunes of the latter still lagged behind (only six deputies elected to parliament by 1892) for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the lingering influence of anarchism's abstentionist teachings.

It is essential to understand, therefore, that the ascendance of legalitarian socialism was a more gradual process than generally believed. Contrary to the impression created by historians who gloat over the "ideological liquidation of anarchism," supposedly accomplished between Costa's defection in 1879 and Cafiero's conversion in 1882, the anarchist movement had not been relegated to oblivion after the suppression of the International. Despite its myriad problems and weaknesses, Italian anarchism clung tenaciously to life throughout the 1880s. Although displaced as the dominant school in Lombardy, Emilia, the Romagna, the Veneto, and Sicily by the end of the 1870s, anarchism yielded ground to legalitarian socialism much more slowly in Piedmont, Liguria, Umbria, Rome, and Naples, and contin-

ued to surpass it in strength throughout Tuscany and the Marches until the 1890s.

The real dilemma for Italian anarchism after 1882 was not that of overtaking and defeating the legalitarians but rather that of restoring the movement's vitality and influence, although some anarchists like Malatesta believed the two objectives were inextricably linked. In reality, only two choices were possible. The anarchists could permit the self-defeating tendencies spawned by defeat and repression to continue to develop unchecked, a process that would condemn the movement to permanent stagnation as a sectarian subculture, isolated from the masses. Or they could confront the attitudes and practices that were weakening the movement and strive to rebuild it into a small but militant vanguard party and to resume their revolutionary mission even in the face of state persecution. Although they might never achieve their goal, the active pursuit of revolution would help the anarchists revitalize their movement and influence the struggles of workers and peasants.

Only one man possessed the moral stature, keen intelligence, and fierce combativeness needed to galvanize the movement in pursuit of the second alternative: Errico Malatesta, who, at age thirty, ranked as Italian anarchism's foremost revolutionary. Malatesta had had little reason to remain in London after Cafiero's departure. A lack of funds frustrated his plans to publish a newspaper, and the correspondence commission to which he had been elected at the London congress immediately became inactive. The movement's deterioration in Italy convinced Malatesta to return home, but he was distracted by the Egyptian revolt that started in June. Determined to help the native insurgency, Malatesta and three comrades went to Egypt in August 1882 but were captured by British forces and later released in Alexandria. He sailed from Egypt sometime between the end of 1882 and the spring of 1883, debarking unobserved at Livorno and finding refuge with comrades in Florence, which became the base of his operations.¹

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST COSTA

Malatesta had not abandoned hope of an insurrection (his London newspaper would have been entitled *L'Insurrezione*), but his principal goal in 1883 was to revive and reorganize the movement by pursuing three objectives: undermine Costa, bring the anarchists into close contact with the

¹ The police chief of Florence, in his summary report of June 15, 1895 (Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 279), asserted that Malatesta arrived at the end of 1882. Fabbri (*Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 86) claims he arrived after March 1883. For a good account of Malatesta's activities and writings during his Florentine sojourn, see Paola Feri, "Il movimento anarchico in Italia dopo la svolta di Andrea Costa, pt. 2," *Trimestre* 12, nos. 1-2 (January-June 1979): 61-110.

workers, and reconstitute the International. His intervention came at a critical juncture in the struggle between Costa and the anarchists. Since his electoral victory in October 1882, Costa had come under severe criticism from former and current associates, both for swearing the loyalty oath and for failing to do anything significant on behalf of the imprisoned Cipriani. His popularity had suffered even in the Romagna. The moment seemed opportune, therefore, to transform criticism into opposition. Thus Carlo Monticelli, a veteran internationalist and the editor of *Tito Vezio* (Milan), organized a meeting in the Lombard capital on February 18, 1883, for the purpose of censuring Costa and his electoral tactics. But the wily Costa appeared unexpectedly at the gathering, bested Monticelli in debate, and obtained the audience's approval of parliamentary activity and its vindication of his personal behavior. The *Tito Vezio* meeting resulted not only in greater prestige for Costa among the Lombards but in sharp criticism of Monticelli for engaging in *personalismo*, that is, personal attacks.²

The confrontation in Milan underscored several problems that had limited the anarchists' ability to resist Costa prior to Malatesta's return. None of the anarchist leaders had been a match for Costa. Their deficiencies as polemicists were compounded, moreover, by their own ambivalence toward this comrade turned adversary. Whereas *Il Grido del Popolo* had published fierce and incisive attacks against Costa in 1881, the movement's principal newspapers in 1882–1883, *Tito Vezio* (Milan) and *L'Ilota* (Pistoia), were ineffective organs of attack and persuasion, thanks to their editors, Monticelli and Giuseppe Manzini, who still respected and admired Costa. After his humiliation in Milan, for example, Monticelli offered a weak promise to continue fighting Costa politically, but reversed himself by defending Costa against the “personal” attacks of anarchists who accused him of being a “traitor” in “bad faith,” responsible for leading the PSRR into collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The same inclination to extend Costa the benefit of every doubt was shared by other veteran anarchists, such as Pezzi and Natta.³

A related factor impeding the fight against Costa was the equivocal attitude toward legalitarians and electoral tactics manifested by figures like Monticelli, who represented the moderate wing of the movement that was now in ideological transition and would soon embrace social democracy. Before the October 1882 election, *Tito Vezio* declared editorially that although nothing good could be expected from parliamentarism, anarchists should support protest candidates as a means of fighting the system and helping imprisoned comrades such as Cipriani and Covelli. After the election, *L'Ilota* insisted that differences over tactics should not obstruct cooper-

² *Tito Vezio* (Milan), March 5, 1883; also Gonzales, *Costa*, 256–260.

³ *Tito Vezio* (Milan), March 5, 1883; *L'Ilota* (Pistoia), April 8 and 22, 1883.

ation, and called for a rapprochement between Costa's PSRR and the Tuscan anarchists, to be followed by a national congress to unify all schools of Italian socialism.⁴

L'Ilota's plea for socialist unity was Malatesta's signal to launch his campaign against Costa. Malatesta had refrained from attacking his old friend for several years, hoping that his espousal of legalitarian tactics was just a temporary experiment. But Costa's election to parliament, his swearing the oath, and his increasingly close collaboration with the radical democrats convinced Malatesta that Costa was permanently lost to the revolution. He was also bitter about Costa's lack of candor. Costa had deliberately deceived everyone about his ideas and real intentions, Malatesta believed, in order to ensure that the Romagnole internationalists would elect him to parliament. In contrast to Monticelli, Pezzi, Natta, and other veterans who lamented Costa's legalitarian orientation but still considered him to be "in good faith," Malatesta now regarded him as an opportunist and power seeker whose duplicitous defection had helped destroy the Italian International.⁵

Malatesta's first public attack came in a letter to *L'Ilota*, charging that Costa had done all in his power to conceal the divisions he had created by repeating endlessly that unity and accord still existed. Only in the Romagna was there still some semblance of unity, but only because Costa had deceived his followers. Unity and accord no longer existed, and it was dangerous to believe they did. Malatesta rejected the notion that only tactics, not principles, separated Costa and the legalitarians from the anarchists. Legalitarianism and anarchism, he believed, were not different programs striving for the same end—they were mutually contradictory. Rather than a reconciliation, Malatesta demanded a complete break with the legalitarians and a reconstituted International comprising only revolutionaries devoted to its original principles.⁶

Malatesta's aggressive attack against Costa, together with his categorical rejection of the legalitarians, was bound to shake up those anarchists who still equivocated on these issues. Natta and Pezzi, two of his closest comrades in Florence, chided Malatesta for his "personal polemic" against Costa, declaring that although they opposed Costa's legalitarian tactics, they did not consider him a traitor. Costa and his Romagnole followers wanted the same ends as the anarchists and differed from them only in their reliance on legal methods during the period of preparation. Once the people were ready to act, the Costians would employ violent means, according to Natta and Pezzi.⁷

⁴ *Tito Vezio* (Milan), October 15, 22, 29, 1882; *L'Ilota* (Pistoia), February 25, 1883.

⁵ Malatesta, "L'Internazionale e Costa," *Volontà* (Ancona), October 11, 1913. His negative impression was further solidified in 1884 when Costa joined the Freemasons.

⁶ *L'Ilota* (Pistoia), April 1, 1883.

⁷ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1883.

Whereas Monticelli had wilted under criticism, Malatesta refused to yield an inch of ground. He declared that friendship had long restrained him from attacking his former comrade, but "Costa's conduct has become too openly opposed to that of a socialist, too openly dangerous for me not to denounce him as a traitor."⁸ The question of "good faith" was academic. What mattered was whether Costa had done good or ill. His conduct in parliament proved the latter. Why in five months as a deputy had Costa never denounced the loyalty oath, spoken of socialism, or decried the plight of the Italian people? Why had Costa developed such good relations with radical democrats such as Giovanni Bovio and Felice Cavallotti? Why did he speak so favorably about Prime Minister Depretis? For Malatesta, the answer to these questions was obvious:

With Costa it is no longer a question of principles or methods. Costa betrayed us when he became a legalitarian. He betrayed the legalitarians when they sent him to represent the interests of socialism in Parliament. It is the logic of traitors and could have been foreseen.⁹

MALATESTA THE MALEFACTOR

Malatesta planned to intensify his campaign against Costa in a newspaper of his own, to be entitled *Il Popolo*, but the project collapsed when the police discovered his whereabouts and arrested him on May 6, 1883.¹⁰ Prefectural reports make clear that Malatesta's "crime" was to have brought about a resurgence of the anarchist movement in Florence. Until recently, the "sect . . . had cautiously retracted as a real and proper party," because of worker indifference toward anarchist doctrines and police action. But now, thanks to Malatesta, in whom "fervent intellect and ingenuity combine with uncommon tenacity of purpose," the local socialists and anarchists had reconciled their differences and reorganized themselves as the Florentine Federation of the IWA. Moreover, the anarchists under Malatesta's influence were regaining leadership of the local workers' movement and threatening to radicalize the agitation against the Berti social legislation bills under discussion in parliament.¹¹

The bourgeois press interpreted Malatesta's arrest as proof that the police had foiled an anarchist plot, for why else would the feared internationalist have returned to Italy except to conspire against the state. Following this

⁸ Ibid., April 22, 1883.

⁹ Ibid. Rejoinders from Pezzi and Natta followed. See *ibid.*, April 29, May 6, 1883.

¹⁰ *Le Révolté* (Geneva), May 12 and 26, 1883; *L'Illota* (Pistoia), May 20, 1883.

¹¹ Prefect of Florence, "Relazione sullo Spirito pubblico e sull'andamento dei Servizi amministrativi pel 2° Semestre 1883," January 24, 1884, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 7, fs. 25.

impeccable logic, the authorities tried to manufacture a nationwide anarchist conspiracy. On March 18, 1883, the twelfth anniversary of the Paris Commune, anarchists throughout Italy had distributed commemorative manifestos, as was their custom. Several anarchists in Rome were arrested for affixing these manifestos to walls, and Merlino, the probable author, was apprehended in Naples. Linking the dangerous Malatesta to these subversive manifestos gave the authorities the plot they were seeking. Thus Malatesta, Merlino, and their comrades were charged with "conspiracy against the state," a crime which provided for preventive detention. But a conspiracy charge required a jury trial, still an unpredictable process that could result in acquittal, especially since the government had no case. Six months after later, therefore, the conspiracy charge against Malatesta and Merlino was dropped and that of constituting an "association of malefactors" substituted. Although it imposed a lesser penalty and did not mandate preventive detention, the crime was adjudicated not by a jury but by the pretori or lesser magistrates of a Correctional Tribunal, thereby guaranteeing a guilty verdict. Keeping anarchists in jail for lengthy periods under preventive detention and then substituting lesser charges that assured conviction was becoming standard procedure by 1883. In this manner, the authorities kept Malatesta and Merlino out of circulation for more than six months before bringing them to trial.¹²

ANTI-COSTA CAMPAIGN RESUMED

The campaign against Costa had gained momentum during Malatesta's imprisonment. With exiles from Nice, Marseilles, London, and Cairo taking the most aggressive stance, attacks against Costa became regular features in the more militant anarchist newspapers—*Proximus Tuus* (Turin), *L'Oppresso* (Pergola), and *Il Popolo* (Florence)—that began publishing in August and September 1883.¹³ Costa's behavior during this time continued to provide grist for the anarchists' mill. On August 8, 1883, he joined the radical chieftain Felice Cavallotti and the republican philosopher Giovanni Bovio on the executive committee of the *Fascio della Democrazia*, an organization created that May by leaders of the Extreme Left and the PSRR to win popular support for their parliamentary alliance and to oppose the Depretis government.¹⁴ Costa's open collaboration with the democratic left was the last straw for old comrades like Pezzi and Natta, who severed

¹² *L'Ilot* (Pistoia), May 20, 1893; *Le Révolté* (Geneva), November 24, 1883; Merlino, *L'Italie telle qu'elle est*, 161–162; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 87–88.

¹³ *Il Popolo* (Florence), September 29, October 9, 1883; *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), September 8, December 1, 1883; Malatesta did not collaborate with *Il Popolo* because he was in jail. Bettini, *Bibliografia dell'anarchismo*, vol. 1, pt. 1; 31–33.

¹⁴ Gonzales, *Costa*, 281; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 80–81, 85–87.

relations with him, and a signal for other anarchists to escalate their attacks, Malatesta above all.¹⁵

Released pending trial, Malatesta returned to Florence at the end of December to publish *La Questione Sociale*, the first of a half-dozen newspapers he directed during his career. Malatesta was not satisfied, however, with attacking Costa in the pages of his newspaper. Instead, he brought the fight directly into Costa's Romagnole stronghold, challenging him to a debate before the socialist federation of Ravenna (the city that had elected him to parliament) on January 20, 1884. Around 150 socialists, most of them Costians, filled the meeting hall, anticipating a stormy encounter. Malatesta, accompanied by Pezzi, was bristling for a showdown, but Costa, after arriving several hours late, shrank from a direct confrontation with the formidable Neapolitan, citing a host of reasons why the debate should not proceed: the meeting was not an official congress of the PSRR, the room was crowded and filled with smoke, he could not stay calm talking with people who accused him of treason, and so on. Malatesta admitted that the Ravenna meeting hall did not compare in splendor to the palace that housed the Italian Parliament; nevertheless, it suited him just fine, as it would have done the Costa of old. But Costa avoided the bait and the meeting was rescheduled for the following day. Only twenty people attended, as January 21 was a workday. The encounter was brief. Costa voiced new objections to the meeting, but Malatesta challenged him to prove his loyalty to the revolution by acceding to three demands: resign from the Fascio della Democrazia and denounce the organization as bourgeois and antirevolutionary; give a speech in parliament on behalf of Cipriani; resign from parliament and invite his constituency to elect Cipriani instead. Malatesta knew that Costa would never agree to these terms. He posed them in order to show the Romagnoles that Costa would do nothing to jeopardize his political career. Maneuvered thus into an untenable position, Costa declared that he would resign from parliament when the PSRR requested he do so; then he stormed out of the room.¹⁶

The Ravenna confrontation provided new impetus for Malatesta's campaign, as more anarchists in Italy and abroad came out against Costa and reconfirmed their opposition to legalitarianism. The situation improved even in the Romagna. Romagnole opposition to Costa was strongest in Forlìmpoli, where the anarchist Valbonesi held sway, and in Rimini, where socialist sentiment favored Cipriani over Costa, and the anarchist Circolo Amilcare Cipriani represented a strong force. Inspired by Malatesta's aggressive stand at Ravenna, the Forlìmpoli group initiated a drive to force Costa's resignation from parliament in favor of Cipriani. The Rimini anar-

¹⁵ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), January 27, 1884; *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), September 8, 22, October 6, 22, December 1, 1883.

¹⁶ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), January 27, 1884.

chists had taken control of the local socialist federation in July 1883, forcing its secession from the PSRR. In August of the following year, they founded the Federazione Romagnola dell'Internazionale, which unified the anarchist opposition in the Romagna. Meanwhile, the PSRR's regional congress at Forlì on July 20 had proved less than a major success, despite Costa's attempt to spread his influence outside the Romagna by renaming his organization the Partito Socialista Rivoluzionario Italiano (PSRI). These developments raised Malatesta's expectations to unrealistic levels, as indicated by his assurances to Emilio Castellani of Venice: "If we know how to be active, Costianism will soon be dead and all or nearly all the socialists of Italy will advance united toward the revolution."¹⁷

After his Ravenna encounter with Costa, Malatesta went to Rome to stand trial with Merlino and six other anarchists from January 29 to February 2, 1884. Witnesses for the defense were not allowed to testify. The only evidence the tribunal considered relevant was furnished by the police. The prosecutor interjected a bit of irony into the proceedings by admitting that each of the accused was an honest and hard-working individual (Malatesta he described as having "superior talent, an indomitable soul, a will of iron"), but that when they associated as a group, they became malefactors.¹⁸ The defendants were not placated by this admission. Merlino rejected the theoretical premise of the case, namely, that the anarchists were malefactors because they were revolutionaries: "The revolutionary sacrifices himself for the general good; the malefactor sacrifices the good of others for his own. We are completely at opposites! Either we are not revolutionaries, or we are not malefactors." Merlino hurled the hated epithet back at his accusers:

Although you believe that you are condemning us, the condemned are yourselves; the mark of infamy that you would stamp upon our brow will always remain imprinted on your hands, so that when you call us *malefactors*, public opinion will translate *honest men*, and when you call yourselves *honest men*, public opinion will translate *malefactors*. [Loud applause in the courtroom; the president admonishes the public.]¹⁹

Found guilty, Malatesta and Merlino were condemned to three and four years imprisonment, respectively. Their comrades (two of whom had fled into exile) received jail sentences ranging from six months to three years.²⁰

¹⁷ Malatesta to Emilio Castellani, August 20, 1884, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 228. Also *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1, 1884; Gonzales, *Costa*, 249, 276–279, 284–285.

¹⁸ *Il Messaggero* (Rome), January 31, 1884.

¹⁹ For excerpts of Merlino's courtroom speech, see *Roma* (Naples), February 6, 1884, in Merlino, *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario*, 235–243, and Merli, *Autodifesa di militanti operai*, 46–53.

²⁰ For the trial and conviction of Malatesta, Merlino, and the others, see *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), February 10, 1884; *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), February 9, 1884; *Le Révolté* (Geneva),

MALATESTA AND THE FLORENTINE LABOR MOVEMENT

Granted provisional liberty while appealing his conviction, Malatesta became actively involved in the Florentine workers' agitation against the social reform bills under consideration in parliament. Sponsored by Domenico Berti, the minister of agriculture, industry, and commerce, the proposed legislation (ultimately defeated) would have provided for new limits upon women's and children's labor, workers' compensation insurance, old-age pensions, arbitration of labor disputes, legal recognition of mutual-aid societies, and greater tolerance of strikes. But socialists, anarchists, and republicans, each for their own reasons, opposed the legislation, as did a majority of the workers, who believed the laws would result in bourgeois domination of the labor movement rather than greater liberty.²¹

The workers' agitation in Florence had begun at the end of 1883 under the auspices of the Federazione Operaia Democratica (FOD), an organization founded by radicals but now under anarchist leadership. Malatesta provided voice and direction for the FOD (reconstituted in May 1884 as the Federazione Operaia Fiorentina) through *La Questione Sociale*, and a member of his editorial staff, Giuseppe Cioci, served as secretary of the organization's executive committee. Malatesta also influenced the local labor movement through the Fratellanza Artiginale, which joined the agitation against the Berti legislation in March 1884, after he addressed a meeting of twenty workers' societies, arguing that the emancipation of the workers must be accomplished outside of parliament. Later that summer, when local bricklayers and their helpers contemplated organizing a cooperative, Malatesta urged them to form a resistance organization instead, so they could fight for higher wages and shorter hours.²²

Endorsement of strikes to improve living conditions represented a significant change from Malatesta's earlier views. The shift derived from the realization that by their disdain toward strikes and agitation for reforms the anarchists had alienated themselves from the labor movement. Greater involvement with labor struggles, he now believed, would bring the anar-

March 16, 1884; *Il Messaggero* (Rome), January 29, 30, 31, February 1, 2, 1884; also Malatesta, "Dichiarazioni e autodifesa alle Assise di Milano (27, 28, 29 July, 1921)," in *Scritti*, 2:296–297; Merlino, *Politica e Magistratura*, 259–260; Fabbri, *Vita e pensiero di Malatesta*, 88–89.

²¹ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 176–178, 201–221 passim; Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 6:293–294.

²² Prefect of Florence, "Relazione pel 2° Semestre 1883," January 24, 1884, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 7, fs. 25; *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), December 22, 29, 1883, January 12, 19, May 25, June 1, July 13, 1884. Also Feri, "Il movimento anarchico in Italia, pt. 2," 75–77; and Nicola Capitini Maccabruni, *La Camera del Lavoro nella vita politica e amministrativa fiorentina (dalle origini al 1900)* (Florence, 1965), 29–30.

chists into close contact with the workers and help win their support for anarchism and social revolution. Trying to forge that union, Malatesta revealed himself to be a superb propagandist, producing simple but incisive treatises comprehensible to any worker who could read. Chief among these writings were the articles in *La Questione Sociale* entitled "L'Anarchia," revised and published as a pamphlet in 1891, and *Fra Contadini* (Between Peasants), a classic tract translated into at least eleven languages.²³

RECONSTITUTING THE ITALIAN INTERNATIONAL

Establishing close ties between the anarchists and the workers' movement was a basic component of Malatesta's plan to reconstitute the Italian International as a revolutionary vanguard organization. His efforts during the first half of 1883 cannot be documented, but in all likelihood they reinforced local initiatives already in progress. The anarchists of the Marche convened a congress in Ancona in March 1883 and reconstituted their regional federation. On June 11 that year, the anarchists of the Lunigiana region of Tuscany met in Carrara and founded the secret Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist Groups. In Florence, the Florentine Federation was reorganized at the end of 1883 under Malatesta's direct supervision. In the Romagna, where the fight against Costa took priority, the Rimini anarchists would establish the Romagnole Federation of the International in August 1884.²⁴

Malatesta's reorganization campaign started gathering momentum in February 1884, when he published the general statutes of the IWA in *La Questione Sociale*, together with a clear statement of the International's purposes.²⁵ The next month, he obtained the endorsement of local organizations throughout the country for a manifesto, which he probably wrote himself, commemorating the thirteenth anniversary of the Paris Commune. The manifesto listed seven regional federations, forty-six sections, twenty-two circles, and sixteen groups as affiliates of the Italian Federation, not including groups in France, Switzerland, Spain, and Egypt. Although many of these organizations may have existed only on paper, the campaign to

²³ "L'Anarchia," *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), May 4, 11, 18, 1884. *Propaganda socialista: Fra Contadini* (Florence, 1884); later editions, more than twenty of which have been published in Italy, bear the title *Fra Contadini*. Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie*, 124–125; Cerrito, *Costa*, 287n. 28.

²⁴ Santarelli, *Socialismo anarchico in Italia*, 62; Ugo Fedeli, "Il movimento anarchico a Carrara, pt. 2," *Volontà* 6, no. 4 (February 29, 1952): 215; prefect of Florence, "Relazione pel 2° Semestre 1883," ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 7, fs. 25; Malatesta to Emilio Castellani, August 20, November 4, 1884, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 228–229; Gonzales, *Costa*, 285.

²⁵ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), February 10, 1884.

reconstitute the International was successful enough to cause the authorities considerable alarm.²⁶

In order to obstruct his activities and prevent his escape, police detectives were no longer content to follow Malatesta from a distance; they now walked virtually beside him wherever he went. Not surprisingly, the intense surveillance of Malatesta and his comrades intimidated many ordinary people with whom they would normally interact. Thus Malatesta found it impossible to find a printer willing to put out *La Questione Sociale* and had to suspend publication of the newspaper from February to May 1884.²⁷ Once operations resumed, Malatesta was able to publish his *Programma e organizzazione dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori* in June, a pamphlet that posited a reconstituted International as the basis for organizing the working class and conducting the revolution.²⁸

Together with *Fra Contadini*, the *Programma* was a benchmark in the evolution of Malatesta's political ideology, anticipating his more mature thought. One of the first Bakuninists to abandon antiauthoritarian collectivism in favor of anarchist communism, Malatesta—unlike Kropotkin—now assumed a relativist position on the issue of how society should be organized after the revolution, realizing that conditions would differ from place to place. Consequently, he accepted collectivism as a transitional phase.²⁹ Also reflected in *Programma* was Malatesta's humane approach to violent revolution. Like Bakunin before him, he reminded the internationalists that the evils of society were caused more by institutions than by men. "Guided by love for all men," the internationalists must constitute themselves as a party committed to armed revolution and the task of guiding it "toward the complete emancipation of oppressed humanity." The alternative was an "uprising of enraged masses, without awareness of means and ends, directed more against people rather than things, that would spill a hundred times more blood than necessary, destroy the results of science and civilization . . . , and restore new and more brutal oppression." Given the enormous hatred the bourgeoisie had inspired, "only a consciously and decidedly

²⁶ Police chief to prefect of Florence, April 7, 1884, ASF, Questura, *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 5.

²⁷ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), February 10, May 4, 1884.

²⁸ Published without Malatesta's name, *Programma e organizzazione dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori* (Florence, 1884) is exceedingly rare. The pamphlet was serialized by Luigi Fabbri in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), April 21, May 14, June 23, July 22, August 25, October 13, November 10, 1934. A handwritten copy is included in the archives of the Florence Questura: ASF, Questura: *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 5. For a discussion of this pamphlet, see Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 215–218; Gino Cerrito, *Dall'insurrezionalismo alla settimana rossa: Per una storia dell'anarchismo in Italia (1881–1914)* (Florence, 1977), 34–35.

²⁹ Malatesta, *Programma*, in *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), October 13, 1834.

revolutionary party can humanize the revolution and make it the bearer of civilization."³⁰

POLICE AND PLAGUE

By the summer of 1884, the anarchist movement was exhibiting signs of recovering from the antiorganizationist malady that had contributed so decisively to its atomization and decline. Whether support for a reconstituted International would continue to grow, however, depended in large measure upon Malatesta's ability to conduct his organization campaign. But now that Malatesta's need for a propaganda vehicle was greatest, *La Questione Sociale* was targeted for suppression by the Florentine police, who repeatedly confiscated the newspaper for minor infractions. *La Questione Sociale* ceased publishing on August 5, 1884.³¹

That summer southern Italy was struck by a cholera epidemic. Malatesta, Pezzi, Minguzzi, Cioci, Galileo Palla, Arturo Feroci, and Pietro Vinci from Florence, as well as anarchists and socialists from other regions, went to Naples to work as hospital volunteers. Financial contributions came from groups everywhere. This was the only time Malatesta had occasion to use his early training as a medical student. Once the epidemic receded, the anarchist volunteers—who lost three of their comrades to the disease—issued a manifesto declaring that the true cause of cholera was poverty, a malady for which there was only one cure—social revolution.³²

The anarchists' volunteer work during the cholera epidemic did nothing to improve their reputation in the eyes of the authorities. The Court of Appeals of Rome confirmed the conviction of Malatesta, Merlino, and the others in January 1885. Although Merlino's sentence was reduced by one year, the court added six months of special surveillance to the sentences of each of the condemned. On April 15 a second appeal was rejected, but when orders for their apprehension were issued, Malatesta and Merlino were nowhere to be found. Malatesta had gone into exile in November 1884, escaping in a sewing-machine crate which comrades shipped out of Florence. Merlino eluded the Neapolitan police and went into exile in January or February 1885.³³

³⁰ Ibid., August 25, 1934.

³¹ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), December 29, 1883, May 4, June 1, 1884; *Le Révolté* (Geneva), March 16, June 8, 1884; Malatesta to Luigi Castellani, August 20, 1884, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 227.

³² *Le Révolté* (Geneva), September 28, December 7, 1884; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 89; Dell'Erba, *Le origini del socialismo a Napoli*, 46–47.

³³ Malatesta to Argante Vecchi, October 31, 1884; Romeo Mingozzi to Emilio Castellani, December 12, 1884; Merlino to Castellani, January 24, 1885. In Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 230, 234, 236–237; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 89–90.

LOSS OF LEADERSHIP

The flight of Malatesta and Merlino climaxed the diaspora of Italian anarchists that had begun with the repression of 1878. Malatesta, rather than endure the inactivity to which most exiled anarchists were condemned in traditionally safe havens such as Lugano and London, went to Argentina in search of revolutionary opportunities. He explained to a comrade on the eve of his departure: "From the news I have received recently [from Argentina] my hopes are ever growing."³⁴ He did not return to Europe until 1889, and save for brief clandestine visits in 1891 and 1894, he could not resume his activities on Italian soil until 1897. Malatesta's absence from 1885 to 1889 constituted an immeasurable loss for the Italian anarchist movement.

Merlino spent most of his exile in London, the quiet atmosphere of the English capital suiting the reserved and intellectual bent of his personality. Here Merlino devoted himself to scholarly endeavor, publishing *Socialismo o monopolismo?* in 1887, the first of many theoretical works that established him as one of the most original thinkers produced by the Italian anarchist and socialist movements. The extent to which he influenced the Italian anarchists from London during the late 1880s is uncertain, although he was a prolific contributor to the newspapers of the period.³⁵

Malatesta and Merlino were not the only anarchist leaders to fall victim to the government's latest round of repression, especially in Florence. Fifty-eight Florentines—Natta, Pezzi, and Grassi among them—had published a manifesto expressing solidarity with Malatesta and Merlino upon their conviction in February 1884, an act resulting in condemnation for "offense to the respect owed the fundamental Laws of the State and offense against the inviolability of private property." They were each sentenced to thirty months imprisonment and a fine of thirty-nine hundred lire.³⁶ The police chief of Florence predicted that the majority of the condemned would flee abroad rather than serve their sentences. In either case, he was certain that "the leaders and their most intelligent and active followers will disappear from Florence for a long time." He foresaw, moreover, that "the remaining affiliates, having no influence over the masses, will be able to organize little or nothing against the governing institutions and the public order."³⁷ Fif-

³⁴ Malatesta to Vecchi, October 31, 1884, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 230.

³⁵ Max Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit der Anarchie: 1886–1894* (Vaduz, 1981), 85–99, 236–237, 309–315; Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, 1988), 165. During the late 1880s, Merlino's articles appeared in *Il Paria* (Ancona), *Humanitas* (Naples), *Il Nuovo Combattimento* (Genoa, Sampierdarena), and *L'Operaio* (Reggio Calabria), among others.

³⁶ Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 239.

³⁷ Florence police chief's report, September 20, 1884, quoted in *ibid.*, 239–240.

teen of the condemned anarchists surrendered themselves after their sentences were reduced to six months of imprisonment and a six hundred lire fine. Natta, Grassi, Pezzi, Minguzzi, and others fled. Now decapitated, the movement in Florence stagnated until the amnesty of 1887 permitted some of the exiles to return.³⁸

THE ITALIAN BRANCH OF THE IWA

After Malatesta's departure, the organizationist initiative was taken up by anarchists in Milan, Venice, and Forlì. The Gruppo Comunista Anarchico of Milan, led by Ambrogio Galli, founded the Federazione Alta Italia on January 10, 1885, for the purpose of spreading their ideas in the stronghold of evolutionary socialism. Two days later the Circolo Socialista "Carlo Pisacane" of Venice, led by Emilio Castellani, editor of the new organ *L'Intransigente*, called for a national congress that would end internal discord among various schools of socialism and achieve the triumph of their common principles—an appeal which did not envision cooperation with the legalitarians, despite its ecumenical tone. Following Malatesta's early advice, Castellani sought the collaboration of Romeo Mingozzi, the leader of an association of braccianti in Forlì and the secretary of the new Romagnole Federation of the IWA. For three months in 1885, as they tried to reorganize the movement, Castellani and Mingozzi became the most influential anarchists in Italy.³⁹

Besides fighting Costa's Partito Socialista Rivoluzionario Italiano, Mingozzi and Castellani were concerned about the threat posed by the Partito Operaio Italiano (POI), which had languished after its founding in 1882 but was now reorganizing. Since the anarchists and the *operaisti* (worker exclusivists) of the POI had much in common, their party leader, Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, was seeking to ally with and ultimately absorb anarchist elements in Lombardy, the Veneto, and the Romagna. To counter the advances of the POI and the PSRI, Mingozzi and Castellani proposed the creation of an Italian Branch of the IWA, with suborganizations in every region. Mingozzi assumed direction of the campaign. Originally from Ravenna, Mingozzi was one of a dwindling number of anarchist collectivists in Italy, although he professed himself a "unitarian" in matters of party organization, believing that the Italian Branch could heal existing divisions among revolutionary socialists. He did not suffer from the antiorganizationist phobia that afflicted so many anarchists of his day; nor did he share the mistrust and hostility toward workers' associations that had become a corollary of

³⁸ Florence police chief's special report, "Anarchismo e socialismo in Firenze dal 1880 al 1895," June 15, 1895, *ibid.*, 280.

³⁹ *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), January 17, 1885; *L'Intransigente* (Venice), January 18, 1885; Malatesta to Castellani, November 4, 1884, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 229.

the antiorganizationist position. Convinced that the anarchists alone could not initiate a revolution, he insisted that the Italian Branch must develop actively among the people, organize workers' associations everywhere, and keep them under the revolutionary influence of the International.⁴⁰

The national congress organized by Mingozi and Castellani met secretly in Forlì on March 15, 1885. Scores of anarchist groups and local federations from almost every region were represented, although the number of delegates is unknown and their identities were never revealed. The results of the congress bore Mingozi's stamp. An Italian Branch of the International was founded with a communications center in Mingozi's hometown of Ravenna, with Castellani's *L'Intransigente* serving as its official organ. The congress called for individual initiative, inside and outside of the organization, to develop revolutionary activity among the comrades. Workers' organizations were to be brought under the influence of the International and guided toward revolution. Strikes were approved for the same purpose. The congress also declared Costa's PSRI a bourgeois political party, although it approved maintaining personal relations with individual members.⁴¹

To Mingozi's dismay, the campaign to organize the Italian Branch lost momentum within a matter of weeks, save in a few places like the Marches. Castellani's *L'Intransigente* ceased publishing, and no other newspaper was eager to replace it as official organ of the Branch. The attitude of the anarchist press was a portent of the Branch's fate. The movement's antiorganizationist publications—*La Questione Sociale* of Turin, (formerly *Proximus Tuus*), and *Il Piccone* of Naples—had ignored the Forlì congress and still regarded the prospect of reconstituting the International with dread. Only *Il Paria* of Ancona, which became the unofficial voice of the Branch after *L'Intransigente* folded, published a brief summary of the Forlì proceedings, but the editors of this newspaper did little to promote the organization.⁴²

Mingozi and Castellani were powerless in the face of the "glacial and disheartening silence" of the anarchist press, a response attributable in part to hostility against Mingozi.⁴³ The anarchists of Naples called him "autocratic" because he had wanted the Italian Branch to be represented by a single official organ, *L'Intransigente*. Others believed that his organizing

⁴⁰ Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 33–44; Castellani to Gnocchi Viani, December 16, 1884, and Mingozi to Castellani, December 12 and 24, 1884, *ibid.*, 150–151, 237, 240; Mingozi to the Roman Federation, April 3, 1885, in Luciano Cafagna, "Anarchismo e socialismo a Roma negli anni della 'febbre edilizia' e della crisi 1882–1891," *Movimento Operaio* 4, no. 5 (September–October 1952): 777.

⁴¹ *Il Paria* (Ancona), April 26, May 17, 1885; Mingozi to the Roman Federation, March 16, April 3, 1885, in Cafagna, "Anarchismo e socialismo a Roma," 774–778. Also Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 42–53; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 224–226; Santarelli, *Socialismo anarchico in Italia*, 66–71.

⁴² *Il Paria* (Ancona), April 26, 1885.

⁴³ Mingozi to Castellani, April 3, 1885, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 261.

campaign benefited only the police, and some accused him of being an agent provocateur.⁴⁴ These accusations were completely unfounded. The backlash against Mingozzi typified the slander that the movement's intransigent sectarians heaped upon anarchists who displayed serious initiative and whose ideas deviated from their own conception of orthodoxy. Perhaps Malatesta might have prevailed in the face of this vicious opposition, but Mingozzi could not. Solid support for his initiative was lacking, and within a few months the Italian Branch existed in name only.⁴⁵

Although some regional and local federations were formed in the late 1880s, every attempt to reconstitute the International or create a new revolutionary organization was met automatically with fierce and widespread resistance. "A vast association," warned *Humanitas* (Naples) in 1887, "is a state in miniature. It kills the spirit of initiative in individuals, who expect everything from this organization. . . . Within an association one finds a charlatan who will deceive, an ambitious person who will exploit, and a spy who will denounce."⁴⁶ *La Gazzetta Operaia* of Turin cautioned that "experience teaches that a vast association of a revolutionary character easily offers its flank to the police, therefore to persecution. . . . United and fighting all together under the impetus of a vast association we run the risk of being crushed with a single blow by adversaries stronger than us."⁴⁷ Fear of authoritarianism and persecution, the twin demons of the antiorganizationists, continued to define the parameters of anarchist activity for many years to come.

⁴⁴ Mingozzi to Castellani, April 3, 1885, *ibid.*, 261.

⁴⁵ Briguglio (*ibid.*, 42–53) argues that the most important factor impeding the rise of a unitarian anarchist organization was the conflict between anarchist communists and collectivists. Regretably, he provides no evidence for this thesis. No other historian who has studied the Italian Branch—Nettlau, Masini, Cerrito, Santarelli, Manacorda—attributes its demise to the conflict between communists and collectivists.

⁴⁶ *Humanitas* (Naples), February 6, 1887.

⁴⁷ *La Gazzetta Operaia* (Turin), July 16, 1887.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE,
1885–1890

AN OVERVIEW

The years 1885 to 1890 offered the anarchists a much better opportunity than the previous quinquennium to reestablish themselves as a vanguard movement with a significant working-class following. A weak and slumping industrial sector, a depressed agriculture, an unstable and corrupt banking system, as well as disastrous government policies, such as Crispi's tariff war with France, combined to create extreme hardships for the Italian people. The response was greater militancy and more pervasive agitation among the working classes than at any time since unification: strikes of braccianti in the Po Valley, the growth of resistance organizations among northern factory workers, strikes of textile workers in Piedmont and Lombardy, and mass demonstrations of unemployed construction workers in Rome.¹

The revolutionary potential presumed inherent in this popular discontent convinced some anarchists that the time had come to shake off the lethargy of the post-International period and resume militant action in close association with the workers and peasants. While the majority of their comrades remained passive and disapproving, a number of spirited young men, who became leaders of the new generation, demonstrated to friend and foe alike that the anarchist movement was by no means dead and buried.

Some of the anarchists' most important activity took place in northern Italy. They played a small role in the braccianti agitation that swept the Po Valley, but could not broaden their influence enough to compete with the legalitarians for the long-term allegiance of the rural proletariat. They were more successful with workers, especially in Piedmont, frequently collaborating with the POI and contributing their services as strike leaders and organizers. They also tried but failed to orient the POI toward revolution. In north-central Italy, the movement's traditional stronghold, the anarchists generally held their position against encroachment from the legalitarians, and in some regions they increased their influence and following to new heights. Efforts in southern Italy were meager and accomplished little. On

¹ Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, 6:179–252, 352–362; Giampiero Carocci, *Agostino Depretis e la politica interna italiana dal 1876 al 1887* (Turin, 1956), 415–588.

the whole, the movement was much more active and influential by 1890 than it had been a decade earlier. Yet the determination and sacrifice of its militant minority could not compensate for the indifference and obstructionism of its passive majority, and the opportunities presented by the popular unrest of this period were not fully exploited.²

ANARCHISTS AND THE BRACCIANTI OF THE POLESINE

The introduction of large-scale capitalist farming combined with crushing taxation to displace tens of thousands of *mezzadri* (sharecroppers) and small landholders throughout much of the Po Valley, forcing them to join the ranks of the rural proletariat. The horrific conditions under which the braccianti subsisted even in normal times worsened as depression spread through the wheat- and rice-growing areas. Landowners and tenant farmers—especially in the districts known as the Polesine, the Cremonese, the Mantovano, and Parmese—were experiencing serious losses due to falling prices and high taxes; they responded by lowering wages and hiring fewer hands. Several thousand braccianti on the brink of starvation went on strike in the Cremonese and the Mantovano in 1882 and 1883, and in Polesine the following year.³

Although they considered the rural proletariat the most combustible social element, the Italian Bakuninists of the 1870s had never developed a sizable following among the braccianti of the Po Valley. The Italian Federation had published a comparatively moderate newspaper in Mantua, *La Favilla*, whose eclectic blend of democratic, progressive, anticlerical, and socialist ideas influenced many peasants in the Mantovano and other areas of the Po Valley. But the fruits of this propaganda were reaped not by anarchists but by radicals and evolutionary socialists like Eugenio Sartori and Francesco Siliprandi, who had organized mutual-aid societies for the braccianti of the Mantovano and the Cremonese in the 1870s (quickly suppressed), and had reconstituted them in more militant form in 1884. However, as opportunities for radical propaganda and agitation among the braccianti had greatly increased by the 1880s, some anarchists intended to explore them.⁴

Whether anarchists were involved with the agitation in the Cremonese

² For an overview of local activities during this period, see Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 218–224, 229–233, and Santarelli, *Socialismo anarchico in Italia*, 70–75.

³ Richard Hostetter, "Lotta di classe nelle campagne: Il movimento contadino di resistenza nella Val Padana, 1884–1885," *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 16, no. 1 (January–March 1970): 45–59; Luigi Preti, *Le lotte agrarie nella valle padana* (Turin, 1955), 46–60.

⁴ Hostetter, "Lotta di classe nella Val Padana," 58–63; Clara Castagnoli, "Il movimento contadino nel Mantovano dal 1866 al movimento de 'La Boje,'" *Movimento Operaio* 7, nos. 3–4 (May–August 1955): 408–415.

and Mantovano is uncertain; however, they did play a role in the Polesine, situated between the Adige and Po Rivers near the Adriatic, where the braccianti were reputed to be the poorest, most downtrodden peasants in Italy.⁵ During 1883–1884, Emilio Castellani from Venice, Eraclito Sovrano from Monselice, Vittorio Panzacchi from Padua, and Francesco Ortore from Adria conducted a propaganda campaign to instill revolutionary ideas and help the braccianti convert their mutual-aid societies into resistance organizations. Their efforts prompted several hundred braccianti—chanting defiant cries of “la boje!” (local dialect for slave driver)—to strike when local landowners reduced wages and discharged day laborers in June 1884. The arrival of troops, 220 arrests, and a cholera epidemic ended the strike, but the braccianti managed nonetheless to obtain a higher percentage of the harvest as a concession.⁶

Agitation for higher wages and crop shares spread from the Polesine to other districts of the Po Valley. In March 1885, several thousand braccianti belonging to the societies organized by Sartori and Siliprandi in the Mantovano and the Cremonese launched the biggest peasant strike since unification. The strike was fiercely resisted by the landowners and ultimately suppressed by the government, which used troops to harvest the grain. The ensuing trial of twenty-two strike leaders in Venice in February–March 1886 resulted in acquittal and the recognition of the braccianti’s right to organize and strike.⁷

Encouraged by spreading peasant unrest, Castellani, Mingozzi, and a few others resumed the anarchists’ campaign in the Polesine and the lower Padovano in April–May 1885. Imagining that cries of “la boje!” were resounding throughout the Polesine, *La Questione Sociale* of Turin jubilantly declared that the peasant agitation was “the wind, blowing in the social substrata, that will unleash the popular storm that will completely destroy this corrupt and inhuman social structure.”⁸ Such lofty expectations, as Castellani revealed, were divorced from reality:

Generally the ideal of the revolution exists among the peasants and the mountaineers, but everyone is afraid of being the first to attack. The [legalitarian]

⁵ Cerrito (“Il movimento anarchico dalle sue origini al 1914,” 119) claims anarchist involvement in the Cremonese and Mantovano, but I have not found substantiating evidence for this.

⁶ Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 54–57, and his “Gli Internazionalisti di Monselice e di Padova (Carlo Monticelli),” *Movimento Operaio* 7, no. 5 (September–October 1955): 747–752.

⁷ For the 1885 strike in the Mantovano and Cremonese, see Hostetter, “Lotta di classe nella Val Padana,” 50–52, 58–68; Castagnoli, “Il movimento contadino nel Mantovano,” 413–417; Rinaldo Rigola, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano* (Milan, 1947), 86–87; Rinaldo Salvadori, ed., *La boje!: Processo dei contadini mantovani alla Corte d’Assise di Venezia*, (Milan, 1962), 20–39.

⁸ *La Questione Sociale* (Turin), April 5, 1885.

socialists are inspired by good intentions, but on the whole are afraid and give us little assistance, evidencing great eagerness for us to leave their areas in order not to become compromised by us. It is disheartening, but I do not despair.⁹

Castellani and his comrades planned to return to the Polesine before the July harvest, but police apprehended them at the end of May. Tried before the Court of Assizes in Padua more than a year later, they were acquitted of all charges of conspiracy, although Castellani remained imprisoned until January 1887 for violations of the press laws. The anarchists made no further efforts to rouse the braccianti of the Po Valley.¹⁰

New opportunities would not arise. The authorities were poised to crush any resumption of peasant agitation that might develop into the full-scale *Jacquerie* the anarchists dreamed about. Moreover, the anarchists in the Po Valley were too few and disorganized to compete against the POI and the PSRI for the allegiance of the braccianti. Because the peasant strikes had captured national attention, Mantua became the moral capital of Italian socialism, and the operaisti and Costians held party congresses there on December 6–7, 1885, and April 25, 1886, respectively, hoping to establish their leadership over the braccianti. At this juncture, however, the landless peasants of the Po Valley opted for neither the economic resistance organizations advocated by the POI nor the political action desired by the PSRI. The immediate outcome of the strikes of 1884–1886 was the development of agricultural cooperativism. Only in the 1890s and early twentieth century did the braccianti become organized in militant unions or “leagues of resistance,” under the aegis of the Italian Socialist Party.¹¹

ANARCHISTS AND THE PARTITO OPERAIO ITALIANO

That the anarchists of the internationalist period had never acquired a following among northern workers and artisans comparable in size and militancy to that developed in the north-central regions placed them at a serious disadvantage in the mid-1880s, when they had to reckon with the Partito Operaio Italiano. The POI had been founded in Milan by the glove maker Giuseppe Croce and the printer Costantino Lazzari in 1882, under the intellectual mentorship of the evolutionary socialist Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani. Relations between the anarchists and the operaisti were problematic from the outset. The anarchists, who welcomed revolutionaries from every

⁹ Castellani to his brother Giovanni, May 18, 1885, in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹ Hostetter, “Lotte di classe nella Val Padana,” 70–72; Rigola, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 86–95; Ragionieri, *Movimento socialista in Italia*, 36–37.

class and strove to emancipate the whole of humanity, rejected the POI's philosophy of *operaismo*, or worker exclusivism, which extended party membership only to men with "calloused hands." The anarchists believed, quite mistakenly, that this policy would cause the POI to ignore the peasantry, which the anarchists still considered the backbone of the revolution. Worker exclusivism for the anarchists also implied a narrow conception of class struggle (proletariat versus bourgeoisie) that might lead ultimately to the establishment of a Volkstaat dominated by the proletariat.

Of more immediate concern, the anarchists feared that, by withdrawing workers from the tutelage of the International to form their own party and emphasize economic gains, the operaisti would steer the working class toward reformism instead of revolution. Yet, many anarchists were originally sympathetic toward the POI because of the operaisti's antipolitical stance and their commitment to wresting workers' societies away from the control of radical democrats and more moderate elements. They became disillusioned, however, when the POI compromised its professed abstentionism by participating in the general elections of 1882. Most anarchists were not sorry to see the POI sink into inertia after its electoral defeats that year.¹²

Thereafter, relations between anarchists and operaisti varied considerably from region to region, as did the extent of anarchist participation in the northern labor movement. By 1887–1888, the prospect of the operaisti joining forces with the legalitarians prompted some anarchists in the Veneto—notably Castellani and Monticelli—to put aside their old suspicions and advocate fusion with the POI and other socialists to form a Partito Operaio Socialista del Veneto. Castellani and Monticelli were strongly criticized by more orthodox anarchists, including Merlino, who rightly concluded that the two most influential veterans of the Veneto were now lost to the anarchist movement.¹³

The cordiality that had developed between the operaisti and the anarchists of the Veneto was frequently lacking in Milan, the Lombard stronghold of both the POI and the "socialist intellectuals" (the contemporary euphemism for middle-class Marxian socialists) led by Filippo Turati, an implacable foe of the anarchists. Anarchist strength in Milan had increased since the founding of the Federazione Alta Italia in January 1885 under Ambrogio Galli's leadership. Committed to spreading revolutionary anarchist-communism among the workers, the new federation was a natural rival of the POI, and relations between Milanese anarchists and operaisti became strained over the next few years, especially in 1888, when the anar-

¹² *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), June 17, August 5, 1888; Castellani to Gnocchi Viani, December 16, 1884; Mingozzi to Castellani, December 24, 1884. In Brugnolgio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 150–151, 240.

¹³ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), June 24, July 1, 8, 1888.

chists of the *Circolo Socialista Milanese*—a local organization in which legalitarian socialists and anarchists had coexisted—tried to dominate the *Circolo* and impose their ideology on the workers' party. When the POI denied the *Circolo* the use of its meeting facilities, the anarchists quit the organization, declaring their determination to pursue a revolutionary course. Both anarchists and operaisti suffered a setback, however, when authorities used local peasant agitation as a pretext to arrest their leaders in May 1889. But shared persecution did not bridge the gap between anarchist intransigence and POI moderation. Instead, the operaisti in Milan steadily overcame their resentment of "bourgeois tutelage" and sought assistance from the socialist intellectuals. Thus, in July 1889, Lazzari and Turati formed the *Lega Socialista Milanese*, an important organization open to legalitarians and operaisti but closed to anarchists—a portent of worse to come.¹⁴

Piedmont was the movement's strongest bastion in northern Italy, and throughout the 1880s anarchism in this region held its own against legalitarian socialism.¹⁵ Anarchists also collaborated with the POI more closely and productively in Piedmont than in other regions, although not initially. Rinaldo Rigola, the textile worker from Biella who served as the general secretary of the General Confederation of Labor from 1906 to 1918, recalled that as a young anarchist in the mid-1880s he and his comrades possessed a "messianic psychology" with respect to capitalism and the revolution they believed imminent. They considered the operaismo of the POI to be "a hindrance and a waste of time."¹⁶ Mutual-aid societies "lost all importance in our eyes," and strikes to improve conditions "left us cold."¹⁷

The same negative attitude toward mutual-aid societies and strikes was regularly expressed by the Piedmontese voice of anarchism in the mid-1880s, *Proximus Tuus* of Turin. Even the few workers' associations geared for economic resistance received little more than tepid approval for promoting solidarity among workers and hostility against capitalism.¹⁸ The Piedmontese anarchists, especially in Turin, began to exhibit a more favorable attitude toward the POI around 1887–1888, as they themselves became more actively involved in labor struggles and more tolerant of workers' organizations and tactics. Both the favorable disposition toward the operaisti and the greater commitment to labor activities can be attri-

¹⁴ Ibid., July 22, 1888; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 271–272, 275, 401.

¹⁵ For anarchism in Piedmont during the 1880s, see Rinaldo Rigola, *Rinaldo Rigola e il movimento operaio nel Biellese: Autobiografia* (Bari, 1930), 81–84, 95–97; Mariella Nejrorti, "Correnti anarchiche e socialiste a Torino (1870–1888)," *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 2 (1968): 185–212.

¹⁶ Rigola, *Autobiografia*, 99.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Proximus Tuus* (Turin), January 17, February 14, 1885.

buted in large measure to the influence of Luigi Galleani, a dynamic young propagandist and agitator who would become a major figure in the anarchist movement.

Dividing his efforts between the anarchist press and the labor movement, Galleani in 1887 cofounded *Gazzetta Operaia* in Turin, helped establish the Circolo Socialista Difesa del Lavoro and the Lega dei Lavoratori in his hometown of Vercelli, and disseminated the idea of economic resistance and revolutionary unity among factory workers in the Biella district. The following year, he lectured in Alessandria, Asti, and other Piedmontese towns, and assumed leadership of the strikes conducted by the mechanics and sand diggers in Turin, and the button makers and cotton-mill hands in Vercelli. In June 1889, Galleani played an active role in the strikes waged against five cotton mills in Turin. Thanks to him, the anarchists helped change the old corporativist mentality of many Piedmontese factory workers, thereby winning new support for themselves and facilitating the growth of the POI in several industrial centers such as Turin, Biella, and Vercelli.¹⁹

The issue of relations with the POI hierarchy and how to influence party ideology and tactics had been a problem for the anarchists since the operaisti held their first congress in Milan in April-May 1885 and fused with the Confederazione Operaia Lombarda at the Mantova Congress of April 1886.²⁰ Some anarchists favored cooperation with the POI because the operaisti remained officially opposed to parliamentarism and had rejected Costa's proposals to unite the POI and the PSRI as a national party. The more intransigent operaisti, in turn, considered the anarchists as possible allies in their struggle to withstand the legalitarians' campaign to politicize the labor movement under the aegis of a socialist party. Prospects for a rapprochement were sharply reduced, however, when the POI again set aside its abstentionist principles and ran candidates in the general elections of May 1886. For many anarchists this act constituted proof that the POI was really a "bourgeois party," and they escalated their attacks against the leaders deemed responsible for the party's evolutionary philosophy and legalitarian tactics.²¹

To Galleani and his Lombard comrade Luigi Molinari fell the difficult task of trying to influence POI policy at the national level in an atmosphere

¹⁹ Nejrotti, "Correnti anarchiche e socialiste a Torino," 210–211; Mariella Nejrotti, "Le prime esperienze politiche di Luigi Galleani (1881–1891)," in *Anarchici e anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo*, 210–214; Ugo Fedeli, *Luigi Galleani: Quarant'anni di lotte rivoluzionarie, 1891–1931* (Cesena, 1956), 51. According to Nejrotti, by 1888 the Turin anarchists had extended their influence over the Associazione federale subalpina degli operai pristinati, the Società degli operai muratori, the Federazione operaia torinese, and the Società operaia barriera Vanchiglia.

²⁰ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 226–246.

²¹ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), June 17, 1888.

of mounting suspicion and hostility. They attended the POI's third national congress at Pavia in September 1887, as the first nonworkers (together with Costa) admitted as delegates. Molinari called for the POI to maintain an abstentionist position with respect to municipal as well as national elections and to declare itself a revolutionary socialist party. Both proposals were rejected.²² On the eve of the POI's fourth congress, which met in Bologna in September 1888, relations between anarchists and operaisti worsened, as hard-liners such as Emilio Zuccarini of Naples renewed their denunciation of the POI for its evolutionist philosophy and legalitarian methods.²³ The issue of elections was now assuming greater significance because impending suffrage reform would triple the number eligible to vote in municipal elections. The POI still rejected political elections in principle but allowed local sections to participate if they chose, a practice that rendered the party's official abstentionism meaningless. Rather than force a breach with the POI over the issue, Galleani and the Turin anarchists pursued a conciliatory approach, declaring that "to close ourselves intolerantly within our coterie, condemning what others do without seeking to spur them to do better, is negligent and harmful to our cause." Their new approach called for anarchists to "infiltrate its [the POI's] ranks and imprint a more revolutionary character upon its actions."²⁴

Galleani represented the anarchists at the POI's Bologna congress of 1888. Fearful lest an aggressive stance play into the hands of the legalitarians and promote their fusion with the operaisti, Galleani gave a conciliatory speech, declaring that "without equivocal confusion of programs, without compromises and impossible unions, it is possible to find the common ground upon which the various schools can struggle in accord."²⁵ In the end, after the congress endorsed POI participation in municipal elections and the principle of class struggle, Galleani managed to avoid a formal split but could not forge an alliance with the POI acceptable to the anarchists.²⁶

It was too late for that. The common ground originally shared by anarchists and operaisti had nearly vanished. By the summer of 1888 every POI leader was weary of the anarchists' attacks and ideological rigidity. Even an intransigent operaista like Alfredo Casati, who resisted accepting bourgeois tutelege from the legalitarians to the end, pleaded with the anarchists:

²² Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 266–272; Nejrrotti, "Le prime esperienze politiche di Luigi Galleani," 211.

²³ *La Questione Sociale* (Florence), June 17, 1888.

²⁴ *La Nuova Gazzetta Operaia* (Turin), September 2, 1888.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, September 30, 1888.

²⁶ Nejrrotti, "Correnti anarchiche e socialiste a Torino," 211; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 274; Fedeli, *Galleani*, 46–50; Pier Carlo Masini, "La giovinezza di Luigi Galleani," *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 3 (May-June 1954): 450–451.

"Enough doctrinairism! We are weary. . . . Counsel us, but do not attack us; come to our congress, discuss, but do not insult us; win us over by majority, but do not come to impose yourselves."²⁷ The anarchists' belated and weak campaign to transform the POI had failed.

TUSCANY

While the anarchists of northern Italy, despite their increasing activity in Piedmont and Milan, could not prevent the fusion of the operaisti and the legalitarian socialists, nor direct the embryonic labor movement away from reformism and toward revolution, their comrades in north-central and central regions managed to retain considerable strength and influence. In Tuscany, anarchism had withstood Costa's challenge and remained the pre-eminent school of socialism throughout the 1880s. The vitality of the Tuscan movement varied from city to city. After Malatesta and more than fifty local leaders were driven into exile or sent to domicilio coatto, one Florentine anarchist lamented that "in Florence everything is dead, and those few who are left refrain from engaging in propaganda for fear of being condemned as malefactors."²⁸ The situation improved somewhat at the end of July 1886, when Egisto Marzoli and several other veterans circulated handwritten copies of Malatesta's *Programma* and constituted the Federazione Anarchica Fiorentina. But the federation comprised only four groups totaling thirty-two members. In April 1887, this skeletal federation, which held meetings in a café and lacked funds to publish a newspaper, renamed itself the Gruppo Anarchico Luisa Michel. The practice of rechristening the same groups with different names created the illusion of activity and growth, but was really symptomatic of the movement's lack of organizational integrity. The Florentine authorities knew that nothing significant had happened.²⁹

A modest revival was experienced after the amnesty of June 5, 1887, enabled some former leaders to return home. At least eight groups, typically bearing names of revolutionary heroes (Louisa Michel) or others symbolizing anarchism's defiance of bourgeois society—I Pezzenti, Vendetta, I Ribelli, Nè Dio nè Patria—were either strengthened or formed in various working-class neighborhoods. One group was composed entirely of "auda-

²⁷ *Il Fascio Operaio* (Milan), July 14–15, 1888, quoted in Brigiglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 91–92.

²⁸ Vittorio Gabbrielli to Cesare Zaniboni, August 17, 1885, quoted in Lorenzo Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in provincia di Massa-Carrara* (Florence, 1976), 135n. 165.

²⁹ Police chief to prefect of Florence, July 23, August 3, 10, 1886; and the police chief's reports entitled "Circondario di Firenze: Prospetto dei gruppi componenti la ricostituita Federazione anarchica fiorentina," August 3, 1886, and "Associazioni Socialisti," July 2, 1887. In ASF, Questura, *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 5.

cious women" from one of Florence's two tobacco factories. Thanks to Luisa Minguzzi and several of her women comrades, anarchism was very strongly represented among the *sigarai* of Florence. The revival of these Florentine groups had a salutary effect on the many anarchist groups existing in the small towns of the surrounding countryside. Working together, they were able to resume publication of *La Questione Sociale* on May 20, 1888. The newspaper folded under police harassment that October but was resurrected in Pisa the following year. Police harassment and the demise of *La Questione Sociale*, however, caused the movement in Florence to relapse into inactivity.³⁰

Pisa had been an important center of anarchist activity since 1874 but was hard hit by repression after the bombing incident of November 1878. With Pisan leaders in jail or exile, Costa was able to acquire a greater following here than in Florence. Yet by 1884 the Costians remained far inferior to the anarchists in number. When he came to speak that year, Costa was informed that only one hundred out of the eight hundred workers belonging to the anarchist groups were likely to attend his lecture. The Costians themselves were still tied too closely to their old comrades to develop a political organization, and as late as 1893 the anarchists still outnumbered them and other legalitarians in Pisa.³¹

After Malatesta's departure in 1885, Pisa replaced Florence as the movement's principal center in Tuscany, and with the return of Oreste Falleri and several other leaders from exile in 1886, the local movement experienced a marked resurgence. Some twenty groups, whose members and supporters may have numbered as many as a thousand workers, were now active. The Pisan prefect considered the anarchists "the most dangerous [element] of the plebes" and expressed dismay that "this dangerous sect, far from losing its affiliates, is growing daily in number."³²

The interaction between Pisans and Florentines illustrates how elusive cooperation could prove even among anarchists of the same region. The Pisans, although never united as a local federation, took up the organiza-

³⁰ Florence police chief's summary report of June 15, 1895, "Anarchismo e socialismo in Firenze dal 1880 al 1895," in Conti, *Socialismo a Firenze*, 280 (see also *ibid.*, 280n. 1); Florence prefect to minister of the interior, February 1, 1889, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 7, fs. 25; Capitini Maccabruni, "Francesco e Luisa Pezzi," in *Movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 4:111.

³¹ Nicola Badaloni, *Democratici e socialisti livornesi nell'Ottocento* (Rome, 1966), 305–312, and his "Le prime vicende del socialismo a Pisa (1873–1883)," *Movimento Operaio* 7, no. 6 (November–December 1955): 881. A few significant lines were omitted when this article was reprinted in his book.

³² Pisa prefect to minister of the interior, June 14, 1886, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 12, fs. 49. Also Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 18–19; Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in Massa-Carrara*, 136–137n. 170; Badaloni, *Democratici e socialisti livornesi*, 290–316, and his "Le prime vicende del socialismo a Pisa," 854–886.

tionist initiative after Malatesta left Italy and attempted several times over the next six years to convene a regional congress for the purpose of constituting a Tuscan Federation.³³ The Pisans repeatedly sought the cooperation of their Florentine comrades but invariably were rebuffed. In Malatesta's absence, the Florentines had lapsed back into an antiorganizationist mode out of fear of persecution. Giuseppe Cioci, Malatesta's former publishing associate, rejected a call for a national congress in February 1887 on the grounds that organization produced "dangerous and evil results," namely, spies and mass trials.³⁴ A subsequent Pisan overture to reorganize and federate was rejected by the Florentines in 1889, as were others in the early 1890s.³⁵

Although many other Tuscan towns—Livorno, Pistoia, Prato, Siena, Piombino—had sizable anarchist groups, as did many hamlets like Pontassieve, the anarchist movement had developed a unique subculture in the province of Massa-Carrara, located in the area known as the Lunigiana. The movement here was unique from the standpoint of social class, numerical strength, and revolutionary militancy. Whereas anarchists elsewhere tended to be artisans and workers of various types, as well as students and autospostati from the middle class, the militants of Massa-Carrara were primarily workers in the marble industry. The hard core of the Lunigiana anarchists were the quarrymen (*cavatori*), who excavated the precious Carrara marble found only in the Apuane Alps. As a group, they constituted the most politically advanced segment of the Lunigianian proletariat and the aristocracy of the marble industry workers. Theirs was an elite born of hardship as well as skill. The difficult, dangerous, and isolated nature of the work fostered a spirit of independence and individualism, which, together with Massa-Carrara's historical tradition of perceiving state authority as foreign and oppressive, made the quarrymen natural candidates for anarchism.³⁶

³³ A Pisan anarchist wrote to the Circolo "Carlo Pisacane" of Venice on December 27, 1884: "Pisa, until the next Tuscan congress, is the center of Tuscan organization. We have made this decision because of the departure of our dear comrades Pezzi, Enrico [Errico] and Natta." Quoted in Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 19n. 68.

³⁴ *Humanitas* (Naples), February 6, 1887.

³⁵ *La Questione Sociale* (Pisa), May 19, 1889; police chief to prefect of Florence, May 21, 1889; police chief of Florence to prefect of Pisa, April [2], 1891. In ASF, Questura, *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 5.

³⁶ On anarchism in the Lunigiana, see Bernieri, *Cento anni di storia sociale a Carrara*, 91–162; Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in Massa-Carrara*, 69–165; Renato Mori, *La Lotta sociale in Lunigiana, 1859–1904* (Florence, 1958), 51–88, 146–153, 162–164, 176–203; Gianfranco Di Gregorio, "Gli anarchici nella vita politica di Carrara (1889–1894), pt. 1," *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 17, no. 4 (October–December 1971): 263–305. Ugo Fedeli, "Il movimento anarchico a Carrara," *Volontà* 6, nos. 2–3 (January 15, 1952): 112–124; 6, no. 4 (February 29, 1952): 213–218; 6, no. 12 (January 31, 1953): 685–692; 7, nos. 1–2 (March 1, 1953): 64–81.

When the International took root in the Lunigiana in 1873–1874—mainly at the expense of the republicans, who would remain a strong force in the area—conversions were rapid and numerous. The repression of 1878–1879 drove many local militants into exile, primarily to Nice and Alexandria (Egypt). Despite these losses, the Ministry of the Interior reported in 1882 that more than one-fifth of the anarchists in Italy resided in the Lunigiana. The movement in Massa-Carrara began to reorganize and grow the following year, thanks to returning exiles such as Galileo Palla, who followed Malatesta's initiative in Florence and formed the *Federazione Anarchico-Socialista di Carrara*. Alarmed by the expansion of the movement (fifteen groups in Carrara alone) and the outbreak of strikes among sawmill and road-construction workers, the authorities launched a new wave of repression in 1884 that drove the anarchists underground. The prefect of Massa-Carrara was frustrated, however, by his inability to extirpate the anarchist movement root and branch, a failure he attributed to the courts' unwillingness to grant his every request for *ammonizione*:

When grave events threaten Society it is necessary to resort to extreme measures. I do not ask for the abolition of the Constitution or for use of courts-martial, but at least a certain flexibility in admonishing and assigning to *domicilio coatto*.³⁷

But even severe repression could not uproot anarchism in the Lunigiana. Social discontent stemming from high taxes, low wages, inadequate housing, cholera epidemics, floods, and the slump in the marble industry ensured the anarchist movement a steady supply of recruits. Between 1886 and 1888, therefore, the anarchists of Massa-Carrara created or reconstituted fifty-five groups, to which several important workers' societies with more than twenty-five hundred members were affiliated. Most of the new recruits were former republicans, and the competition between the rival movements frequently resulted in violent encounters.³⁸

Ironically, despite their tenacity and numerical strength, the Lunigiana anarchists never played a major role in the life of the movement, not even in Tuscany. The poorly educated quarrymen produced no leaders of distinction, and until 1903 they were unable to publish a regional newspaper on a regular basis—a deficiency aggravated by the dearth of local printers willing to assist them. The anarchists of Massa-Carrara were the foot-soldiers of the revolution, physically rugged and tough, easily aroused, unafraid of vio-

³⁷ Prefect of Massa-Carrara to interior minister, August 27, 1885, in ACS, Min. Giust., *Miscellanea*, 1886: b. 74, fs. 41.

³⁸ Fedeli, "Il movimento anarchico a Carrara," 6, no. 4: 215–218; Mori, *Lotta sociale in Lunigiana*, 79–87, 146–149, 151–157, 163; Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in Massa-Carrara*, 69–138; prefect of Massa-Carrara to interior minister, April 26, 1888, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 9, fs. 36.

lence, and fiercely devoted to the cause. The only lapse in their commitment to direct action occurred in 1889–1890, when the anarchists in Carrara—fearful of an accommodation between the church and the monarchy, and disgusted with the policies of the local government—joined the collectivist-republicans in an electoral campaign to oust the incumbent municipal administrators. They were thoroughly disillusioned by their experiment in electoral politics and more ready than ever to take up arms against the state.³⁹

THE ROMAGNA

Anarchism in the Romagna had survived the defections and demoralization caused by Costa, and by the late 1880s the movement there experienced a substantial revival. This resurgence was directly related to the decline of the PSRI, which had reached peak strength in 1884 and was disintegrating by 1887. The anarchists were not merely beneficiaries of the PSRI's demise, they were important contributors to it.⁴⁰

When Malatesta challenged Costa to resign from parliament to help elect Cipriani as a protest candidate, he saddled him with an inescapable burden, one which the deputy made still heavier by his own conduct. Suspicious of the anarchists' purpose in promoting Cipriani's candidacy, and fearful lest their agitation jeopardize his relations with the republicans, Costa never embraced Cipriani's cause with true conviction. His public activities on the latter's behalf were halfhearted and ineffective, a fact not lost on many of his own followers. The anarchists, in contrast, transformed the Cipriani affair into a cause célèbre and kept it one for four years. Throughout the Romagna they organized *comitati ciprianiisti*, including PSRI members and other progressive elements, that campaigned for Cipriani's election—not so he could become a deputy, but to secure his release from prison. To the anarchists, therefore, went the major credit for Cipriani's four electoral victories in Ravenna and Forlì between May 1886 and February 1887. Each victory was annulled, but the public sympathy for Cipriani and the hostility against the government, which each electoral campaign generated, convinced King Umberto to pardon the "Prisoner of Portolongone" in July 1888, on the eve of his first official visit to the region.⁴¹

The anarchists' role in securing Cipriani's liberation, plus widespread disillusionment with Costa's policies, helped them regain much of the pop-

³⁹ Mori, *Lotta sociale in Lunigiana*, 163, 168–170; Fedeli, "Il movimento anarchico a Carrara," 7, nos. 1–2: 65–67; Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in Massa-Carrara*, 140–145.

⁴⁰ For the decline and collapse of the PSRI, see Gonzales, *Costa*, 286–345; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 142–214.

⁴¹ Gonzales, *Costa*, 321–323; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 154–155.

ular support they had previously lost, and many former internationalists and PSRI members returned to the fold. By 1887–1888, the anarchists outnumbered the Costians in Forlumpoli, Rimini, and Forlì, and were getting stronger elsewhere. The only city where they had not gained ground was Imola, Costa's hometown.⁴²

The resurgence of Romagnole anarchism had also been assisted by Germanico Piselli, the director of *La Rivendicazione* in Forlì. A former internationalist who had supported Costa's svolta and joined the Socialist Federation of Forlì, a PSRI affiliate, Piselli described himself as a "possibilist anarchist."⁴³ His ideology was in fact similar to Costa's. Piselli wanted a socialist party that would include all schools, but with the anarchists assigned the leading role rather than the Costians. By mid-1887, Piselli began attacking Costa openly for his alliance with the republicans and for his negligible efforts on behalf of Cipriani, whose election to parliament Piselli had vigorously championed in *La Rivendicazione*. Later that year he engineered a local coup against Costa by convincing the three-hundred-member Socialist Federation of Forlì to quit the PSRI and reconstitute itself as the anarchist Federazione Internazionale Forlivese. Thus, by 1888, as chief of an anarchist federation, director of a weekly newspaper, and secretary of a local peasant cooperative, Piselli had established a power base that made him a major force in Forlì. Outside the Romagna, Piselli was regarded with suspicion by most anarchists because of his ideological eclecticism and opportunistic behavior. He was attacked regularly for many transgressions: his early support for Costa, his electoral campaign for Cipriani (most anarchists opposed protest candidacies), and his espousal of socialist participation in municipal elections.⁴⁴ Despite his unpopularity among the orthodox, Piselli became the unofficial spokesman for many anarchist groups, even beyond the Romagna, that accepted the eclectic ideas and programs advocated in *La Rivendicazione*. By 1890, in fact, a new minority current of possibilist anarchism, or "Costianism without Costa," had developed within the movement.⁴⁵

⁴² Gonzales, *Costa*, 307n. 58, 323, 330, 334; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 154–166; Cerrito, *Costa*, 315–318.

⁴³ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), November 12, 1887.

⁴⁴ For Piselli's self-defense against attacks from *Il Paria*, *Le Révolté*, *Humanitas*, *Lo Schiavo*, and fellow Romagnoles, see *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), December 18, 1886; April 30, June 18, August 20, October 22, 1887; and August 31, 1889.

⁴⁵ On Piselli, see Briguglio, *Partito operaio italiano*, 71–74; Evangelisti and Zucchini, *Partito socialista rivoluzionario*, 155–167, 171–178; Gonzales, *Costa*, 323–325; Mariella Nejrotti, "Germanico Piselli," in *Movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 4:175–177. According to Eva Civolani, there is evidence in the archives of the Paris prefecture suggesting that Piselli was an agent of the Italian police. See her "Carlo Monticelli," in *Movimento operaio italiano: Dizionario biografico*, 3:569.

THE MARCHES

Anarchism in the Marches remained the dominant school of socialism throughout the 1880s. Although Costa developed a following in Pesaro and Ancona during the years between his svolta and his election to parliament, Malatesta reestablished orthodoxy by 1884, and thereafter abstentionism and support for Cipriani remained the benchmarks of socialism in the Marches. Malatesta's influence also resulted in absorption of the anarchist collectivist current that had survived in that region, finding expression in *Il Risveglio* of Ancona. By this time, too, anarchist groups—still referring to themselves as sections of the Italian Federation—had revived in most of the region's principal cities and towns and supported Mingozi's campaign to establish the Italian Branch of the IWA. Eleven cities in the Marches were represented at the Forlì congress of March 1885, and by August that year a dozen anarchist circles constituted themselves as the Anarchist Socialist Federation of Pesaro-Urbino.⁴⁶

The enthusiasm generated at Forlì spurred the anarchists of Ancona, where the movement was strongly supported by dock workers, to found *Il Paria*, one of the most enduring (April 1885–March 1887) organs of anarchist communism. *Il Paria* was called upon to serve as the quasi-official voice of the Italian Branch after *L'Intasigente* of Venice ceased publishing. But the role was beyond the capabilities or desires of its editors. *Il Paria* exhibited most of the negative tendencies responsible for the movement's decline. Although the newspaper regularly covered the activities of local groups affiliated with the Italian Branch, even after it ceased to exist save in name, the editors were ambivalent about anarchist organization and never seriously promoted the national federation. Furthermore, as they shared the standard anarchist prejudices toward strikes and worker/peasant societies, the editors could not commit themselves to the goal that Malatesta and Mingozi had considered crucial to revival—bringing the anarchists into close contact with workers' associations. What *Il Paria* did best was disseminate propaganda among friends and polemicize with enemies.⁴⁷

Il Paria's inherent antiorganizationism may have contributed to the lack of federative initiatives undertaken in the Marches after the formation of the Pesaro-Urbino Federation in August 1885. Not until August 1888 did groups from the area, following the example of the Umbrian anarchists who had constituted a regional federation at their congress in Foligno that July, convene at Senigallia “for the purpose of coming to an understanding and

⁴⁶ Enzo Santarelli, *Le Marche dall'unità al fascismo: Democrazia repubblicana e movimento socialista* (Rome, 1964), 89–94, 101–106, 155–119.

⁴⁷ *Il Paria's* weekly column on the Italian Branch was entitled “Atti dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori.”

seriously doing something to advance our principles.”⁴⁸ Initially, the only “serious” work the Marchigiani deemed necessary was the nomination of a propaganda commission whose task was to publish pamphlets and bring out a new propaganda organ, *Il Libero Patto* (Ancona), which began publishing in February 1889.⁴⁹

Luckily, *Il Libero Patto* was not a reincarnation of *Il Paria*. Directed by Cesare Agostinelli, who had spent time with Malatesta in Argentina, *Il Libero Patto* condemned the movement’s antiorganizationism and isolationism in almost the same language Malatesta employed in his own publication nine months later.⁵⁰ Gathered around *Il Libero Patto* were a number of other young anarchists from the Marches—Adelmo Smorti, Emidio Recchioni, Rodolfo Felicioli, and later Luigi Fabbri and Nino Samaja—who from the 1890s to 1914 constituted Malatesta’s most devoted collaborators and transformed Ancona into the anarchist capital of Italy.⁵¹ At this juncture, as the new group revived the movement in Ancona and vowed to pursue the revolutionary path taken by the French a century earlier, these young anarchists quickly became a source of concern to the authorities and would eventually pay dearly for their militancy.⁵²

LIGURIA

Liguria had been a republican stronghold since the Risorgimento, and socialist penetration—anarchist or legalitarian—progressed slowly in the region. The Italian Federation claimed only a half-dozen groups and four to five hundred members in Liguria in 1874. When the correspondence commission transferred its headquarters from Florence to Genoa in 1878, it did so hoping to win new recruits in the region as well as to escape persecution

⁴⁸ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), December 21, 1888.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Compare the article “Tutta La Verità,” *Il Libero Patto* (Ancona), March 17, 1889, with Malatesta’s “I Nostri Propositi, II: L’Organizzazione,” *L’Associazione* (London), December 7, 1889. Santarelli (*Le Marche*, 131) notes the similarity between the critical assessment of the movement expressed in *Il Libero Patto* and that offered subsequently by Malatesta. However, Santarelli ignores Agostinelli’s Argentine connection with Malatesta and attributes the critique not to the latter’s influence but to the ideological and organizational crisis anarchist groups were experiencing. Another example of Malatesta’s influence on Agostinelli is the relativist approach the latter adopted toward the future anarchist society. See *Il Libero Patto*, June 9, 1889.

⁵¹ Ettore Croce, *Nel domicilio coatto: Notevole di un relegato* (Lipari, 1900), 74–82, 168–171; Ugo Fedeli, “Momenti ed uomini del socialismo-anarchico in Italia, 1896–1924,” *Volontà* 13, no. 10 (October 1960): 608–619, and no. 11 (November 1960): 656–668. By 1897–1898, the Marches had more anarchist groups than any region in Italy. See Santarelli, “L’Anarchisme en Italie,” 139.

⁵² Prefect of Ancona to the interior minister, March 21, 1889, ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 2, fs. 2.

in Tuscany. But the Genoese authorities proved just as aggressive as the Florentines, crushing the local movement in 1878–1879. The prefect of Genoa was able to report four years later that neither the anarchists nor the Costians had any importance in his city, which was fast becoming a major industrial center.⁵³ Not until 1889 did the Genoa prefect report a “noticeable awakening” of the anarchist movement in Liguria.⁵⁴ By that time, anarchist activity revolved around the newspaper *Il Nuovo Combattiamo!*, which first appeared in August 1888 under the direction of the young printer Eugenio Pellaco. One of the movement’s more spirited publications, to which anarchists such as Merlino and Galleani contributed regularly, *Il Nuovo Combattiamo!* ceased publishing in November 1889, but was resurrected by Pellaco ten months later as *Combattiamo!*.⁵⁵

Although concerned about their gains among Genoese workers, the authorities were even more dismayed by the anarchists’ growing influence in La Spezia, with its great naval base, the Arsenale. Constructed in 1869, the Arsenale by 1890 employed some six thousand to sixty-five hundred workers—out of a total population of fifty thousand people—in the production of naval vessels, artillery, torpedoes, and related instruments of war. Many of these workers had emigrated from nearby Massa-Carrara and brought their anarchism with them. But La Spezia itself was a breeding ground for the antistatist philosophy. The military ran the entire city like a barracks, but the workers of the Arsenale, in particular, were subjected to constant surveillance and severe discipline. Since La Spezia’s harsh ruler and exploitative employer were one and the same, daily life for the workers lent credence to the anarchists’ insistence that the state was the incarnation of evil.⁵⁶

The repression of 1878–1879 had eliminated most of the internationalists who worked at the Arsenale, but the movement in La Spezia survived. During the mid-1880s, the anarchists surpassed the legalitarians in influence and intensified their rivalry with the republicans, with whom they frequently had violent clashes. Around 1888 anarchist propaganda among the workers and military personnel prompted another government campaign to uproot the subversives. Several anarchists were enticed by an agent provocateur into a conspiracy to bomb the Politeama Duca di Genova, a theater frequented by local aristocrats and government officials. The ensuing trial in Genoa on October 7–9, 1890, sent a dozen anarchists to prison for constituting an association of malefactors. They were quickly replaced.

⁵³ Prefect of Genoa to interior minister, March 2, 1883, *ibid.*, b. 7, fs. 28.

⁵⁴ Prefect of Genoa to interior minister, April 24, 1889, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Pietro Galleani, “Il settimanale degli anarchici genovesi negli anni 1888–1890,” *Il Movimento Operaio e Contadino in Liguria* 4, nos. 1–2 (January–April 1958): 51–59.

⁵⁶ Gaetano Perillo, “Il movimento anarchico alla Spezia dal 1888 al 1893,” *Il Movimento Operaio e Socialista in Liguria* 5, no. 1 (January–February 1959): 3–8.

The economic crisis of the late 1880s caused a reduction in ship building that hit La Spezia hard. Mounting unemployment and worker agitation helped the movement rebound, and by 1890 there were at least five hundred anarchist workers in La Spezia, some fifty of them employed at the Arsenale and military-related factories. The following year the anarchists of La Spezia published their first newspaper, *L'Operaio*, a sign that the movement was now entrenched.⁵⁷

ROME

Anarchism's most impressive reversal of ill fortune occurred in Rome. Suppressed after the Matese insurrection, the movement in the capital languished for the next six or seven years, reviving only when Malatesta initiated his campaign to reconstitute the International in 1884. By then Roman socialism was divided evenly between anarchists and Costians, many of the latter having emigrated from the Romagna. But neither exercised much influence over Roman workers' societies at the time.⁵⁸ This began to change with the growth of Rome as a political and administrative center and the housing-construction boom of the early 1880s, much of it devoted to suburban apartments for civil servants employed in the burgeoning bureaucracy. For several years the "building fever" brought tens of thousands of workers to Rome from the Romagna, the Marches, and Lazio. Surplus labor kept wages low at the same time that inflationary pressures escalated the cost of living, especially rent. In 1887 hardship turned to desperation. The building boom had been entirely speculative, and when credit dried up and Italy plunged into economic depression following the tariff war against France, the boom collapsed. Some eighty thousand construction workers ultimately found themselves unemployed, and agitation for jobs or redress assumed mass proportions.⁵⁹

With the unemployment crisis providing an opportunity for new initiatives in Rome, Costa set out to create several organizations that might promote the political development of the workers' movement and safeguard their interests. In January 1888 he founded the *Federazione Operaia Socialista*, which included anarchists as well as Costians. That same month he invited 130 workers' societies in Rome to form the *Consolato Operaio*. Seeking an electoral conduit, Costa courted the workers' societies of Rome because their members could vote, whereas the immigrant workers from

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5–17; Antonio Bianchi, *Storia del movimento operaio di La Spezia e Lunigiana (1861–1945)* (Rome, 1975), 39–41.

⁵⁸ Rome police chief to interior minister, February 10, July 18, 1884, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 14, fs. 55.

⁵⁹ Cafagna, "Anarchismo e socialismo a Roma," 729–788.

other regions could not.⁶⁰ Neither group, however, was receptive to Costa's political approach. The Consolato Operaio failed to survive, much like the Lega dei Lavoratori that Antonio Labriola—Italy's most important Marxist theoretician—tried to establish that same year.⁶¹

Indifferent to Costa and deaf to socialist pleas for calm, the unemployed workers conducted a demonstration on March 1, 1888, that escalated into full-scale rioting and looting for several days. Police rounded up thousands of immigrant workers and deported them to their native provinces, hoping thereby to defuse the situation. But the economic crisis deepened throughout the spring and summer, further swelling the ranks of the unemployed. The republicans now made a bid to take command of the worker agitation, but at a rally attended by some four thousand workers in the Piazza Dante on September 30, their moderate proposals were overwhelmingly rejected. Approved instead was an anarchist agenda calling for social revolution. The episode marked the ascendancy of the anarchists as leaders of the unemployed.⁶²

Rome had the usual contingent of anarchists who regarded workers' societies with suspicion. But the dominant element among local militants included relatively young workers, led by Ettore Gnocchetti, Dante Melinelli, and Pietro Calcagno, who were influential figures in the local labor movement as well as proponents of direct action. On February 8, 1889, Gnocchetti incited another round of violent demonstrations that convulsed the city. His arrest slowed the anarchists' efforts to extend their control over the agitation, but only for a few weeks. On March 24, 1889, Luigi Innocenti and other young hotheads conducted a coup within the Federazione Operaia Socialista, dissolving the organization, which they believed inadequate for revolutionary purposes, and proposing the formation of the Federazione di Propaganda Anarchica which would push the workers toward violence. Not all anarchists approved this separatist strategy. Many, like Melinelli, the former secretary of the FOS, joined the Circolo Operaio di Studi Sociali formed soon thereafter by the socialists.⁶³

Accord between anarchists and socialists in Rome ended abruptly when Costa sought to utilize the Circolo Operaio for electoral purposes. Another blow to anarchist hopes came when thirty-five workers' societies, accounting for more than ten thousand votes, formed a campaign committee that elected eight candidates to the municipal council, despite strong pressure from the anarchists to abstain. With the issue of elections sharply dividing

⁶⁰ An important point Cafagna fails to mention. See Cerrito, "Il movimento anarchico dalle sue origini al 1914," 120.

⁶¹ Cafagna, "Anarchismo e socialismo a Roma," 743–744.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 745–747.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 747–748, 750–751.

the Roman labor movement, the anarchists found themselves increasingly isolated from the workers' societies and their socialist mentors, both prone to peaceful resolution of the economic crisis. The anarchists retained leadership of the unemployed, however. So when hopes of revolution mounted with the coming of the new decade, the only question for anarchists was how best to turn unrest into action.⁶⁴

THE MEZZOGIORNO

Assessing the conditions the anarchists faced in 1890, Merlino wrote despairingly that the movement in southern Italy was "still in embryo, . . . attached as a cadet branch on the genealogical tree of Democracy. Except perhaps for Naples and a few other localities, it has no life of its own, no independent existence."⁶⁵ Ideological immaturity and lingering ties with radical democracy were most pronounced in Calabria and Puglia, where the movement had declined substantially since the days of the Italian Federation.⁶⁶ The situation was only slightly better in Sicily. Evolutionary socialism had eclipsed anarchism in Sicily during the internationalist period, but both currents were completely overshadowed by radical democracy throughout most of the 1880s. The situation improved by the end of the decade when a younger element became active. Nevertheless, probably no more than a few hundred anarchists were active on the entire island, most of them artisans and university students in the cities of Palermo, Catania, Messina, Trapani, and Marsala.⁶⁷ Largely cut off from the great mass of landless peasants, who represented Sicily's revolutionary potential, the anarchists devoted most of their efforts to the publication of newspapers.⁶⁸

Merlino's biggest frustration with the Sicilians centered upon their ideological eclecticism. Giovanni Noè, "one of the first pioneers of anarchy in Sicily," advocated abstentionism in his newspaper *Il Riscatto* but supported democratic candidates in local elections. Merlino detected similar signs of

⁶⁴ Ibid., 755–756.

⁶⁵ *Supplemento al N. 12 della Campana* (Macerata), November 16, 1890.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ As late as 1893, one militant from Catania wrote: "There are not many anarchists in Sicily. Catania and Trapani have the most, and except for a nucleus of some fifty in Palermo we have only some isolated comrades." See *Sempre Avanti!* (Livorno), November 18, 1893.

⁶⁸ *Il Riscatto* (Messina: June 1888–January 1894); *La Riscossa* (Trapani-Marsala: August–November 1889); *La Nuova Riscossa* (Trapani-Marsala: December 1889–November 1890); *Il Proletario* (Marsala-Trapani: September 1890–October 1892); *Il Proletario* (Marsala, 1891); *Il Piccone* (Catania: November 1890–February 1892). See Ente per la Storia del Socialismo e del Movimento Operaio Italiano (hereafter referred to as ESMOI), *Bibliografia del socialismo e del movimento operaio italiano* (Rome and Turin, 1956), vol. 1, *Periodici*, 601, 679, 712–713, 763, 771; Gino Cerrito, ed., *I periodici di Messina: Bibliografia e storia* (Milan, 1961), 24–33.

ideological confusion among the anarchists of Catania, Palermo, and Caltanissetta. The anarchists of Trapani and Marsala, who published *Il Proletario*, he deemed more orthodox, yet their tendency to inject "a certain acrimony" into their polemics caused him concern.⁶⁹ Merlino did not perceive at the time that "the brave and courageous comrades of *Il Proletario*" were really inflexible antiorganizationists who would soon oppose everything he and Malatesta advocated.

In Naples, after the departure of Merlino and the capable Niccolò Converti, who published *Il Piccone* for several months in 1885, the movement became dominated completely by staunch antiorganizationists such as Luigi Felicò, Giovanni Bergamasco, Francesco Cacoza, Luigi Clarelli, and Luigi Crucoli. Their sole ambition was to conduct intellectual propaganda, and toward that end they published *Humanitas* in 1887. The intellectual uniformity of its editors was self-described:

It [the group] is composed of a few individuals, who for now, are in complete accord; they do not diverge minimally in their ideas and they hold each other in reciprocal esteem. Decisions are always unanimous, nor is there need for lengthy discussions to reach an accord: that because of our restricted number and the conformity of our ideas.⁷⁰

The editorial staff—save for Emilio Zuccarini—contributed only the hackneyed arguments common to the antiorganizationist tendency.⁷¹ Serious intellectual content was provided by outsiders such as Merlino, Monticelli, and Giovanni Rossi ("Cardias"), who founded an experimental anarchist colony in Brazil, the Colonia Cecilia. When Zuccarini assumed direction of *Humanitas* in May 1887 and called for the formation of an International Anarchist Alliance,⁷² Clarelli, Cacoza, and other opponents of organization joined with Felicò and Bergamasco to found *Il Demolitore*, an organ imbued with the spirit of pan-destruction. Both newspapers succumbed before the end of the year. The antiorganizationist groups of Naples, which feuded among themselves as often as they cooperated, had become largely inactive by 1890, when Felicò resurrected *Il Grido del Popolo*. The newspaper was noteworthy only for the intellectual confusion of its director.⁷³

Thanks to the intransigence and sectarianism of the antiorganizationists, and the steady gains of the legalitarians led by Pietro Casilli, anarchist influence among the Neapolitan working class had become negligible by the

⁶⁹ *Supplemento al N. 12 della Campana* (Macerata), November 16, 1890.

⁷⁰ *Humanitas* (Naples), May 2, 1887.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, February 6, 20, 28, 1887.

⁷² *Ibid.*, May 2, 1887.

⁷³ Buccellato and Iaccio, *Anarchici nell'Italia meridionale*, 322–328, 330–332; Dell'Erba, *Le origini del socialismo a Napoli*, 48–67.

late 1880s. Some 273 workers' associations, comprising 52,176 members, existed in Naples as of July 1885, according to the local prefect. Of these, only 3 associations, with 380 members, were anarchist. Two years later the prefect reported that the anarchists of Naples were still not gaining converts among the working class. The situation remained unchanged by the end of the decade.⁷⁴

THE NEW ANARCHIST GENERATION

One question that cannot be answered is how many anarchists were living in Italy during the 1880s.⁷⁵ The suffrage reform of 1882 did not cause a massive defection of anarchists into the ranks of legalitarian socialism. But defections there were, especially in the Romagna, and this factor, together with anarchism's declining influence among workers, the fear of persecution among potential adherents, and the steady exodus of militants emigrating abroad, undoubtedly reduced the ranks of the movement significantly in the 1880s.

Whatever its numerical losses, however, anarchism still possessed enough appeal to attract a new generation of young leaders and militants in the 1880s, who would remain active for the next twenty-five years or more. Among the most important members of the new generation were Luigi Galleani from Piedmont; Luigi and Ettore Molinari from Lombardy; Pietro Gori and Galileo Palla from Tuscany; Cesare Agostinelli, Adelmo Smorti, Emidio Recchioni, and Rodolfo Felicioli from the Marches; Eugenio Pellaco from Liguria; and Ettore Gnocchetti and Pietro Calcagno from Rome. (Luigi Fabbri and Armando Borghi, the most important anarchists active in Italy in the early twentieth century, were still boys during the 1880s.)

Galleani and Gori were the most outstanding figures of this new generation, eventually approaching, if never equaling, the stature and importance of Malatesta and Merlino as leaders and thinkers. Galleani, one of the movement's most eloquent writers and spellbinding orators, became the venerated leader of Italian anarchist workers in the United States between 1901 and 1919.⁷⁶ The multitalented Gori—poet, dramatist, lawyer, and

⁷⁴ Prefect of Naples to interior minister, May 31, 1886, February 19, 1888, in ACS, Min. Int., *Rapporti dei Prefetti*, b. 10, fs. 40; Dell'Erba, *Le origini del socialismo a Napoli*, 58–68.

⁷⁵ At an internationalist meeting in Cesena on July 17, 1881, a register was cited, claiming total membership of the "socialist party" (anarchists only or all schools?) to be 16,739. Gonzales, *Costa*, 195. A report by the interior minister indicates there were 5,627 anarchists in Italy in 1882. Mori, *Lotta sociale in Lunigiana*, 126–127. The reliability of these figures is doubtful.

⁷⁶ See Fedeli, *Galleani*; Masini, "La giovinezza di Luigi Galleani," 445–457. Galleani's principal writings appeared in the newspapers *La Questione Sociale* (Paterson, N.J., 1901–

criminologist—was the greatest missionary ever produced by the Italian movement, spreading the anarchist gospel in North and South America for several years during the 1890s. The purity of his spirit and the sincerity of his commitment placed him on a par with Cafiero as a great apostle of the anarchist ideal.⁷⁷

Galleani, Gori, and the others restored a measure of activism among a militant minority of the rank and file, reestablished a following among workers in several regions, and generally fostered a resurgence of the movement discernible by the end of the decade. Unquestionably, they represented the best of the new generation. But the 1880s also produced another element that represented anarchism at its worst, a group of fanatics whose intolerance and fractious behavior operated to the complete detriment of the movement—the so-called individualists.

The individualists were not disciples of Max Stirner, Benjamin Tucker, John Henry Mackay, or other theorists of individualist anarchism, none of whom were known in Italy until the twentieth century. The Italian individualists of this period were an evolutionary offshoot of the antiorganizationist current, a spontaneous mutation amounting to a new breed. Although they frequently called themselves anarchist communists, the individualists defied description in standard ideological terms. Basically, they were amoralist who embodied the worst attitudes and propensities of the antiorganizationist current: egoistic preoccupation with individual autonomy and free initiative; unwavering rejection of organization in any form; isolation from and contempt for the masses; and, in some cases, a strong tendency toward individual acts of violence.⁷⁸

The individualists frequently evolved in exile. Persecution, privation, and alienation often defined the lives of anarchist refugees and could not fail to extend the parameters of emotional and intellectual extremism. This was especially true of exiles living in Paris, where anarchism's most irrational tendencies sprouted like fungi after rain. The most notorious Italian individualists of the late 1880s belonged to the Gruppo Intransigente of Paris, a

1903) and *Cronaca Soverviva* (Barre, Vt., and Lynn, Mass., 1903–1919). See also his *La fine dell'anarchismo?* (Newark, 1925).

⁷⁷ See Carlo Molaschi, *Pietro Gori* (Milan, 1959); Sandro Foresi, *La vita e l'opera di Pietro Gori nei ricordi di Sandro Foresi* (Milan, 1949); *Commemorando Pietro Gori nel 40° anno della sua morte* (Rome, 1950); *Rosignano a Pietro Gori: Raccolta di saggi e testimonianze a cura del comitato cittadino costituitosi per le onoranze a Pietro Gori* (Cecina, 1960); Gigliola Dinucci, "Pietro Gori e il sindacalismo anarchico in Italia all'inizio del secolo," *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 13, nos. 3–4 (July–December 1967): 289–299. For Gori's writings, see *Opere*, ed. Pasquale Binazzi, 12 vols. (La Spezia, 1911–1912; 1921); *Scritti scelti*, ed. Giuseppe Rose, 2 vols. (Cesena, 1968).

⁷⁸ On the individualists of the late 1880s, see Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 218–228; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 225–236; Cerrito, "Il movimento anarchico dalle sue origini al 1914," 122.

disparate circle of extremists that included the expropriationists Vittorio Pini and Luigi Parmeggiani, and at least one spy in the pay of the Italian government.⁷⁹ Pini, the wild man of the group, had been converted to expropriationism in Paris rather than in Italy, where the practice was rare. Partial proceeds from his robberies were used to finance a few issues of *Il Ciclone* and *Il Pugnale*, which attacked the "rational approach" of anarchists like Malatesta, who believed it necessary to organize the forces of the revolution and prepare the masses for revolt through instruction. The means by which the masses would emancipate themselves, proclaimed *Il Ciclone* on its masthead, were simple: "Expropriation, Dagger, Dynamite." Therefore,

enough with organization and dictators, and instead of wasting our time serving as foot-stools for these scoundrel mystifiers, let us occupy ourselves with chemistry, making bombs, dynamite and other explosive materials that must be used for the destruction of the stinking and ruling bourgeoisie.⁸⁰

Eager to stimulate action, *Il Ciclone* ran a column entitled "Anarchist Cuisine: Meatballs for the Bourgeoisie," providing a list of implements and ingredients necessary to make dynamite.⁸¹

Warnings originating from "a perfectly reliable source" and conveyed to the Italian ambassador at Berlin by the King of Portugal convinced Prime Minister Crispi that Pini might attempt to assassinate King Umberto during the latter's first visit to the Romagna in 1887. As he could not rely on the French police because of the tariff war between the two countries, Crispi sent Police Inspector Ettore Sernicoli (who later wrote several sensationalist books about the anarchists) to Paris to place an informant within the Gruppo Intransigente and monitor their activities.⁸²

Two years later Pini and Parmeggiani did return to Italy bent on violence, but not against the king or any other representative of the state. Their targets were Celso Ceretti, the ex-Garibaldino and former internationalist, and Camillo Prampolini, the leading evolutionary socialist of Emilia. The individualists were intent upon revenge against Ceretti and Prampolini because they had admonished the Gruppo Intransigente for its vicious

⁷⁹ Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 229–230; Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 218–225; Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 177–179; Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France (1880–1914)* (Paris, 1951), 172–173; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), December 21, 1888.

⁸⁰ *Il Ciclone* (Paris), September 4, 1887.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² The papers of Francesco Crispi contain several files devoted to Sernicoli's investigation of Pini's expropriationist activities in Paris, as well as his attempt to murder Celso Ceretti and Camillo Prampolini in Italy. ACS, *Carteggi di Personalità*, Francesco Crispi (Palermo), scat. 67, fs. 452 and 458. Sernicoli's primary source, identified only as "D. M.," was someone close to Pini. See also Francesco Crispi, *The Memoirs of Francesco Crispi*, ed. Thomas Palamenghi-Crispi (London, 1912), vol. 2, *The Triple Alliance*, 321–326.

attacks against Cipriani and his proposal for a Union of Latin Peoples to counter the growing hostility between the French and Italian governments. Thus, in February 1889, Pini and Parmeggiani stabbed Ceretti in Mirandola, and were en route to attack Prampolini when they were intercepted by the police. The two expropriationists escaped after a shoot-out in Reggio Emilia and returned to Paris. But the days of the Gruppo Intransigente were numbered. Pini was soon apprehended by the French authorities and spent the rest of his life in the prison colony at Cayenne. Parmeggiani escaped to London, where he presided over another group of individualists in the 1890s—the Gruppo dell'Anonimato. His real métier, however, was that of agent provocateur for the Italian authorities, specializing in attacks against Malatesta and Merlino. Other individualists in the 1890s would perform an equivalent function, albeit without orders or pay from Rome. Obstructionism become the *raison d'être* of the individualists.⁸³

REVOLUTIONARY FATALISM

In the last analysis, the individualists were not the worst by-product of the crisis and transformation of Italian anarchism during the 1880s. Far more detrimental was the state of disgruntled passivity—now ideologically reinforced—that pervaded most anarchist circles. During the 1870s, peasant and worker unrest on a smaller scale had convinced the anarchists that social revolution was imminent, prompting insurrectionary action to hasten its arrival. The 1880s saw nothing comparable in the way of revolutionary activity. This was partly attributable to government repression and the movement's poverty of means. But the revolutionary expectations of most anarchists had also changed. Few still believed that their actions could impact the revolutionary process. "Regulations, agreements, or associations for the purpose of *making the revolution*" were generally considered superfluous.⁸⁴ Instead, as *Gazzetta Operaia* of Turin explained, most anarchists now looked to the inexorable laws of nature and history to bring about the revolution:

Society is marching with giant steps towards anarchy. Consequently, the revolution will be an historic, fated, and universal event, independent in an almost absolute way from our will. It will happen by itself, when men are conscious of

⁸³ For contemporary accounts of these events, see *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), October 27, November 10, 17, December 1, 14, 21, 1888; February 23, April 6, 20, 27, 1889. Also Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 230–233; Nettlau, *Die erste Blutezeit*, 220–224. Masini suspects that the Italian government was employing Carlo Terzaghi to penetrate the Gruppo Intransigente and use Pini to undermine Cipriani's campaign for a Union of Latin Peoples. Masini's theory is entirely plausible, though not substantiated by documents in the Crispi papers.

⁸⁴ *Gazzetta Operaia* (Turin), July 16, 1887.

the need for a radical economic transformation. It will come by itself even against our will and against ourselves.⁸⁵

Exiles abroad shared the same view of humanity's redemption by ineluctable forces: "The revolution that will come to pass," declared *Lo Schiavo* of Nice, "will not be created by a party, but will be made by the people and for the people, in accordance with historical, fated laws."⁸⁶

This fatalistic view of revolution derived from the mechanistic and materialist philosophies that influenced Italian intellectual life during the late nineteenth century, including Marxism and the evolutionary positivism of Darwin and Spencer. The anarchists, as Malatesta often noted, had from the very outset absorbed the determinism of the Marxists despite their rivalry with them, so much so that "we were in many ways more Marxist than those who professed themselves such."⁸⁷ The theories of Darwin and Spencer were perhaps even more influential.⁸⁸ The labor leader Rinaldo Rigola recalled that "it was not rare to hear workers who at school had just learned to read and write expounding the theory of the evolution of the species and natural selection."⁸⁹ Starting in the mid-1880s, however, the Italian movement began to absorb a uniquely anarchist brand of revolutionary fatalism from Peter Kropotkin, whose influence in matters of ideology soon eclipsed that of all native anarchist thinkers.⁹⁰ Kropotkin's fatalistic ideas and harmonistic vision of social development—anarchist communism would triumph immediately after the revolution in accordance with the laws of nature, and individuals could do what they wanted and take what they needed—were enormously appealing to a movement that had experienced defeat and disillusionment. By the 1890s, therefore, Kropotkin's ideas would assume the authority of dogma.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Ibid., July 16, 1887.

⁸⁶ *Lo Schiavo* (Nice), October 8, 1887.

⁸⁷ Malatesta's interview with Luigi Ciancabilla, *Avanti!* (Rome), October 3, 1897, in Malatesta, *Scritti scelti* (1954), 49.

⁸⁸ For the influence of Darwin and Spencer on Italian socialism, see Luigi Bulferetti, *Le ideologie socialistiche in Italia nell'età del positivismo evoluzionistico (1870–1892)* (Florence, 1951), esp. 271–296.

⁸⁹ Rigola, *Autobiografia*, 90.

⁹⁰ Although the transference of his ideas is hard to document in the 1880s, it is likely that many Italians were familiar with the articles Kropotkin wrote for *Le Révolté* and *La Révolte*, which were subsequently republished as *Paroles d'un révolté* (Paris, 1885) and *La conquête du pain* (Paris, 1892). Rigola (*Autobiografia*, 97) recalled that in his hometown of Biella the anarchists were "assiduous readers of *La Révolte* of Paris." The Kropotkin treatise most widely read in Italy during the mid-1880s was the pamphlet *Aux Jeunes Gens* (also derived from *Le Révolté*), translated into Italian as *Ai giovani* by Costantino Lazzari in 1884. See also Bulferetti, *Ideologie socialistiche in Italia*, 290–291n. 428.

⁹¹ For Kropotkin's revolutionary fatalism and its effects on the anarchist movement, see Errico Malatesta, "Pietro Kropotkin—Ricordi e critiche di un vecchio amico," *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), April 15, 1931; Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 157–158; Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 117–118.

Ultimately, the belief that the revolution was fated to happen regardless of human will or action provided a comforting rationalization for anarchists who had withdrawn from the struggles around them. Most, like the editors of *Gazzetta Operaia*, were willing to pursue modest objectives on an ad hoc basis:

Let us organize, yes, but in small numbers, temporarily for a given endeavor that is useful. Upon its completion let us separate in order to reunite again at an opportune moment, otherwise, we will always commit the grave error of establishing churches with apostles and prophets of bad luck.⁹²

The typical endeavor that such anarchists chose to pursue—"to prepare the spirit for the future revolution"⁹³—was propaganda of the word: distributing leaflets, affixing manifestos on walls, printing pamphlets, and above all publishing newspapers.⁹⁴ With journalism the preferred form of activity, the movement grew exceptionally rich in newspapers between 1885 and 1890—at least forty titles not counting those published abroad. The press, in fact, had become the movement's only tangible institution in the absence of a national federation or party, the only nexus linking individuals and protean groups throughout Italy and abroad.⁹⁵

The publication of newspapers, however, could hardly represent the revolutionary mission the anarchist movement had originally conceived for itself. A small minority in some regions, unwilling to await the revolution in a state of passive expectation, struggled to engender a spirit of militant activism among workers, and their efforts helped restore anarchism to a position of influence and respect by the onset of the 1890s. But their activities remained local, uncoordinated, and devoid of general strategic purpose—even if, in their cumulative impact, they constituted a resurgence. The negative legacy of the internationalist period—fear of persecution, hostility toward organization, inflexible intransigence and sectarianism—had not been surmounted. On the contrary, its negative and self-defeating tendencies were now strengthened by the obstructionist fanaticism of the individualists and the revolutionary fatalism of the majority of the rank and file. And with most anarchists still remaining aloof and passive in the face of the popular unrest seething around them, the movement could not elevate itself to a stronger competitive position within the national orbit of Italian socialism and labor. The anarchists' best efforts of the 1880s proved too little, too late.

⁹² *Gazzetta Operaia* (Turin), July 16, 1887.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 157–158.

⁹⁵ For a nearly complete list of newspaper titles in chronological order, see Bettini, *Bibliografia dell'anarchismo*, vol. 1, pt. 1, 33–63. Also see these titles as alphabetically listed in ESMOI, *Bibliografia del socialismo*, vol. I, *Periodici*.

MALATESTA AND RESURGENCE, 1889–1891

MALATESTA IN ARGENTINA

Malatesta's five-year stay in Argentina constituted an important but little known phase of his career, one that contributed substantially to the program of thought and action he advanced upon his return to Europe in 1889. When he arrived in Argentina in 1885, together with a group of anarchist refugees that included Francesco Natta, Francesco Pezzi, Luisa Minguzzi, Cesare Agostinelli, and Galileo Palla, he had no intention of remaining long. He hoped to obtain funds for a printing press, transmit propaganda back to Europe, and return to Italy or Europe as soon as possible. As usual, nothing went according to plan. Save for six months in 1886, during which he, Palla, Agostinelli, and a few other comrades panned unsuccessfully for gold in the wilds of Patagonia, Malatesta spent most of his Argentine sojourn in Buenos Aires, working as a mechanic with Natta, who had taught him the trade in Florence. In his spare time, Malatesta organized an anarchist social-studies group, established ties with Spanish, French, and Belgian anarchist groups, published *La Questione Sociale* (1885–1886) in Italian and Spanish, and served as an active propagandist for the local workers' movement, especially the bakers among whom the anarchists were strongly represented.

When Ettore Mattei, founder of an Italian anarchist circle in Buenos Aires in 1884, organized the bakers into a society for economic resistance, he asked Malatesta to write the program. Malatesta's text served as the model for programs adopted later by the shoemakers, zinc workers, mechanics, and carpenters. In January 1888, Malatesta and Mattei led a bakers' strike that lasted ten days and secured a 30 percent increase in wages and other gains. The strike precipitated a wave of work stoppages in other industries (shoemaking, railways, metallurgy, and construction) that continued throughout 1888 and 1889. Although still convinced that strikes alone could never liberate the working-class, Malatesta became more favorably disposed toward work stoppages because Argentina lacked the "industrial reserve army" that enabled employers to replace strikers in Europe, and because the strikes in Buenos Aires helped the anarchists enlist workers in their ranks. In 1888, Malatesta and his comrades tried unsuccessfully to

create a labor federation open to all ideological tendencies and committed to militant strike action, the first such attempt in Argentine history.

Malatesta also advocated anarchist unity among Argentines. Because all of the ideological conflicts that divided the movement in Europe had been exported to Argentina, Malatesta attempted to mediate between rival factions of immigrant anarchists. The Spanish Argentines, like their brethren in Andalusia and Catalonia, were split between the anarcho-communists, who advocated propaganda of the deed and opposed organization, and the anarcho-collectivists, who supported strike action and labor federations. Malatesta expressed his preference for a future society based on anarchist communism, but did not reject syndicalism and the workers' movement. After Malatesta returned to Europe in 1889, the antiorganizationists emerged as the dominant faction in Argentina, and for several years thereafter they attacked the Italian leader as an "organization maniac," an "intriguer," and a "ridiculous federationist." After 1901, however, with the formation of the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina inspired by Pietro Gori—a labor federation based more on *anarquismo obrerista* than anarcho-syndicalism—the Argentine movement assumed the direction Malatesta had recommended. Experts thus consider Malatesta's contribution to Argentine anarchism and labor to have been very important.¹

L'ASSOCIAZIONE (NICE-LONDON)

Because of his 1884 conviction, Malatesta could not return to Italy when he left Argentina in September 1889, so he and several comrades who accompanied him from Buenos Aires settled instead in Nice. The following month they launched a new propaganda organ, *L'Associazione*. Malatesta had to keep his presence in France a secret, as he was subject to arrest for violating an expulsion decree dating back to 1880. But his identity was inadvertently revealed when Carlo Terzaghi—the old agent provocateur, now plying his trade out of Geneva—wrote to *L'Associazione* under a pseudonym in the hope of obtaining salable information. Malatesta recognized the spy's handwriting and denounced his machinations. The exposé attracted the attention of the French police, so Malatesta and his comrades transferred *L'Associazione* to London in November.²

¹ For Malatesta's stay in Argentina, see Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 146–150; Gonzalo Zaragoza Ruvira, "Errico Malatesta y el anarquismo argentino," *Historiografía y Bibliografía Americanista* 16, no. 3 (December 1972): 401–424, and his "Anarchisme et mouvement ouvrier en Argentina à la fin du XIX^e siècle," *Le Mouvement Social* 103 (April–June 1978): 14–19.

² See "Le spie," "Ultim'ora" "Azzati-Terzaghi: una spia smascherata," and "Ancora Terzaghi," in *L'Associazione* (Nice and London), October 16, 27, November 30, 1889; January 23, 1890. See also Nettlau, *Malatesta*, 146; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 94.

The newspaper had appeared regularly for two months when Malatesta abruptly announced the suspension of publication. A member of the editorial staff, Giuseppe Cioci, who previously helped him publish *La Questione Sociale* in Florence, had absconded with the group's treasury. Malatesta managed to publish some of his pamphlets, including the complete edition of *Fra contadini* in 1890 and *L'Anarchia* in 1891, and these pamphlets circulated widely. But the loss of *L'Associazione* crippled Malatesta's propaganda efforts just when he hoped to reorient the movement in Italy and Europe.³

Despite its brief duration, *L'Associazione* represented an important milestone in Malatesta's career.⁴ Between the years 1889–1890 and 1897–1898, when he published *L'Agitazione* in Ancona, Malatesta's intellectual development matured and his anarchist philosophy achieved full expression. Many of the beliefs Malatesta advanced in *L'Associazione* had already been voiced in *La Questione Sociale* and the *Programma* of 1884, but now they were more thoroughly analyzed and sharply argued. Still greater refinement, as well as stronger emphasis on syndicalism, would differentiate his writings in *L'Agitazione* from those in *L'Associazione*; nevertheless, the guidelines for Malatesta's revolutionary activities throughout the next decade and beyond were fully articulated in 1889–1890. The leitmotifs of Malatesta's philosophy were reflected in the goals he urged anarchists to pursue: association, relativism in matters of ideology, a return to the people, action in every form, and a leadership role during and after the revolution.⁵

The principle of association was central to Malatesta's revolutionary ideology. He realized that advocating association would alarm the anti-organizationists and individualists, but he knew that the movement's decline could not be reversed if it remained atomized and isolated. He rejected the antiorganizationists' belief that only a completely amorphous move-

³ *L'Associazione* (London), January 23, 1890. Other pamphlets he published through the "Biblioteca dell'Associazione" at this time were *La politica parlamentare nel movimento socialista* (1890) and *In tempo di elezioni* (1890).

⁴ *L'Associazione* contains more than a score of Malatesta's articles, most unsigned; his simple, forthright style is unmistakable, however. Besides his articles and the pamphlets mentioned above, Malatesta's other important writings of this period include the "Programma" that appeared in the first number of *L'Associazione*, and the *Appello*, a four-page flyer issued in September 1889. Exceedingly rare, a complete copy of the *Appello* is contained in the ACS, Min. Giusto., *Miscellanea*, 1889: b. 83, fs. 60. For portions of the *Appello*, see the typewritten passages contained in the Ugo Fedeli Archive, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam, and the published extracts in Ugo Fedeli, "Il movimento anarchico a Carrara," 7, nos. 1–2: 67–73; Nettlau, *Breve storia*, 181–183, and his *Die erste Blütezeit*, 151–155.

⁵ Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 6–7. Asked by Fabbri how much his ideas had changed since *L'Agitazione*, Malatesta replied in a letter of July 11, 1931, that the difference was only a matter of nuance, although now he had less faith in trade unions and was less optimistic about attaining anarchist communism than in 1897.

ment could guarantee the liberty and free initiative of the individual. Such notions negated the anarchist program. Association was the natural form of society; it did not threaten the individual, rather it provided the best guarantee of freedom, justice, and equality. Association was the *sine qua non* of anarchy itself.⁶

Before anarchists could associate, however, they would have to cease squabbling over ideology. Already apparent in his writings of 1884, Malatesta's relativism in matters of speculative theory had become stronger after his stay in Argentina and his experience mediating between rival anarchist tendencies. Utopian blueprints, a priori assumptions, abstract and rigid formulas—Malatesta eschewed them all. He believed it a waste of time to battle over whether postrevolutionary society would be collectivist, communist, or some other preconceived system. Unanimity in matters of theory was not necessary before acting. Theoretical differences should be subordinated to the immediate demands of the common struggle against the state and bourgeois society, and in his program of 1889 Malatesta appealed to anarchists of every tendency to abandon their ideological exclusivism.⁷

As a relativist, Malatesta stood apart from the great majority of his Italian comrades in 1889–1890, for whom anarchist communism had become dogma. Although convinced that anarchist communism was the form of societal organization that would best assure equality and social justice, Malatesta—until 1900 at least—preferred to use the generic term *anarchist socialist* to describe himself.⁸ Communism was not an object of blind faith for Malatesta, and he rejected the fatalistic assumptions about communism that most Italian and French anarchists derived from Kropotkin.⁹ Positing free will (*volontà*) as the driving force in human development, Malatesta maintained that “the modes and the particulars of associations and agreements, of the organizations of work and social life, will not be uniform, nor

⁶ Appello and Malatesta, “L'indomani della rivoluzione, I: autorità e organizzazione” and “I nostri propositi, II. l'organizzazione,” *L'Associazione* (Nice and London), October 16, December 7, 1889; Errico Malatesta, *L'Anarchia* (London, 1891), 30 and passim.

⁷ “Programma” and “L'indomani della rivoluzione,” *L'Associazione* (Nice), September 6, October 16, 1889. On Malatesta's relativism, see Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 100–106. A relativist approach to anarchist theory, known as *anarquismo sin adjetivos* (anarchism without adjectives), was also propagated at this time by Fernando Tarrida del Mármol and Ricardo Mella in Spain. Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology*, 134–154.

⁸ “Programma” and “I nostri propositi, I: l'unione tra comunisti e collettivisti,” *L'Associazione* (Nice and London), September 6, November 30, 1889. Also Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 109.

⁹ Malatesta frequently attacked the fatalistic concepts derived from Kropotkin, but he never criticized the Russian theorist directly. He feared he might weaken the anarchist movement if he diminished Kropotkin's reputation. Malatesta's most insightful critique of Kropotkin appeared long after the latter's death. See his “Pietro Kropotkin—Ricordi e critiche di un vecchio amico,” *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo), April 15, 1931, translated in Richards, *Errico Malatesta: His Life & Ideas*, 257–268.

can they as yet be foreseen or determined.”¹⁰ The nature of society after the revolution would be determined spontaneously and harmoniously over time by the “free wills of all.”¹¹ Urging his comrades to stop arguing over hypotheses, Malatesta recommended a conciliatory alternative: “Let us hold to basic principles and strive to teach these to the masses so that they, too, when the hour comes, will not quarrel over a phrase or a detail.”¹²

The association principle in matters of social organization, and relativism in questions of speculative theory, Malatesta hoped, would cure the internal dissension that kept the anarchist movement divided and weak. Equally important to the task Malatesta envisaged was bridging the gap between the anarchists and the masses. Anarchists could not hope to convert the masses to their creed if they remained aloof from them. One of the few anarchists to acknowledge the serious extent to which the movement had lost contact with the day-to-day struggles of the working class, Malatesta attributed the problem to the sectarian and isolationist tendencies that had developed during and after the First International. To remedy the situation, Malatesta called upon the anarchists to “return among the people,” utilizing propaganda of the word and deed to arouse the spirit of revolt against property, government, and religion.¹³

Malatesta's program of 1889 called for almost every means of direct action except terrorism. Aware that Europe had entered a new era, Malatesta concluded that the anarchists should abandon some of their old tactics and adopt some new ones. The classic armed band, he now believed, was ill suited for contemporary conditions because the many requirements needed for guerrilla action were too difficult to fulfill. He urged, therefore, that the anarchists substitute “the free, spontaneous, incessant action of individuals and groups” for the “classic band.”¹⁴ One form of group action that Malatesta strongly endorsed was the strike. The critical attitude toward strikes he had expressed in the 1870s had already changed to favor by 1884, and did so even more after his Argentine experience. But it was the wave of worker agitation sweeping Europe and America in the late 1880s, above all, that caused Malatesta to substantially rethink his position regarding strikes. Anarchists in the past, he now acknowledged, had been mistaken when they rejected the strike as an economic weapon and ignored its importance as a vehicle for moral revolt. They should, therefore, seize every occasion to

¹⁰ *Appello*.

¹¹ “Programma,” *L'Associazione* (Nice), September 6, 1889.

¹² *Appello*.

¹³ “A proposito di uno sciopero,” “La propaganda a fatti,” and “I nostri propositi, II: l'organizzazione,” *L'Associazione* (Nice and London), September 6, October 16, December 7, 1889.

¹⁴ “La propaganda a fatti,” *L'Associazione* (Nice), October 16, 1889.

stimulate and participate in strikes, as a means to resume contact with the masses and orient them toward revolution. He declared in *L'Associazione*:

The masses arrive at great vindications by means of small protests and small revolts. Let us join them and spur them forward. Spirited men throughout Europe are at this moment disposed toward great strikes of agricultural or industrial workers that encompass vast regions and numerous associations. Therefore, let us provoke and organize as many strikes as possible; let us ensure that strikes become contagious, that when one explodes it extends quickly to ten or a hundred different trades, in ten or a hundred towns.

Indeed, every strike has its revolutionary characteristic; every strike finds energetic men to punish the bosses and, above all, to attack property and to show the strikers that it is easier to take than to ask.¹⁵

Malatesta had been particularly impressed with the London dockworkers' strike of September 1889. He believed that, had labor leaders encouraged the workers to expand their stoppage into a general strike, conditions in London would have become critical for the bourgeoisie—at which point the people, realizing their opportunity, might have rebelled and the revolution ensued.¹⁶ Malatesta was careful, however, to distinguish between a general strike and a general uprising. Unlike the syndicalists who soon became prominent in the French anarchist movement, Malatesta never considered the general strike synonymous with the revolution. “The strike,” he cautioned, “must not be a war of folded arms”¹⁷—an allusion to the syndicalists' notion that capitalism could be brought down if all the workers simply halted production. The general strike, according to Malatesta, was merely an excellent opportunity to initiate the revolution by leading the workers in armed attack against the state and in expropriation of the bourgeoisie.¹⁸

The breadth and intensity of workers' agitation in 1889 convinced Malatesta that “a great revolution is approaching, perhaps it is imminent.”¹⁹ He firmly disavowed, however, the notion that “the revolution will come by itself, like manna from heaven, and that we have only to fold our arms to assist impassively in the collapse of the old society.”²⁰ Still much closer to

¹⁵ “A proposito di uno sciopero,” *L'Associazione* (Nice), September 6, 1889.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Letter from Malatesta to *La Révolte* (Paris), October 4–10, 1890, recapitulating the issues he discussed at an antiparliamentary meeting held in London on October 3, 1890.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* For additional discussion of Malatesta's views on syndicalism, see Maurizio Antonioli, “Errico Malatesta, l'organizzazione operaia e il sindacalismo (1889–1914),” *Ricerche Storiche* 12, no. 1 (January–April 1983): 151–204.

¹⁹ “Programma,” *L'Associazione* (Nice), September 6, 1889.

²⁰ *Appello*.

Bakunin than Kropotkin in his conception of revolutionary strategy, Malatesta believed that although only the masses could make the revolution, they needed the guidance of a vanguard anarchist party. For only the anarchists, who harbored no secret desire for power, could arouse the masses to full consciousness of their might and spur them to destroy the state and every other obstacle blocking emancipation. And only the anarchists could be relied upon to resist the formation of new governments that would impose their will upon the masses, arrest and divert the course of the revolution, and prevent the evolution of a libertarian society.²¹

In order to fulfill the movement's "great mission," Malatesta recommended the formation of an international revolutionary-anarchist-socialist party.²² By *party* he meant "the totality of all who embrace the program, who advocate its triumph and who consider themselves bound not to do anything opposed to it."²³ This party would reconcile the free initiative of individuals and groups, and the free development of all faculties and wills, with the unity of action and the discipline required for action. The modes by which cooperation and solidarity were to be achieved would vary considerably, depending upon local conditions and the needs of the struggle. Groups devoted to action might have to operate on a clandestine basis, divulging their identity only to trusted comrades or perhaps retaining complete secrecy. Others capable of operating openly might organize themselves into federations. Ultimately, the anarchists of different regions and countries would establish close relations with one another so that agreement could be reached over common goals.²⁴

Malatesta's program of 1889–1890 represented a radical alternative to the modes of thinking and behavior that had come to predominate in anarchist circles by the late 1880s. Nothing less than a total transformation of the movement could realize his vision of the anarchists as a vanguard party devoted to revolutionary activity. Malatesta did not believe he was asking the impossible. Whether anarchism would meet Malatesta's challenge and develop into a serious party of action on the Italian left or con-

²¹ "Programma," *L'Associazione* (Nice), September 6, 1889.

²² Ibid. Nettlau (*Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 181) was wrong in claiming that Malatesta wanted to revive the International. Aware that anarchists were still haunted by "the ghost of leaders and forms," Malatesta knew they would not tolerate the resurrection of the International, an institution irreversibly identified with authoritarianism. Nor did he desire its reconstitution. "The International," he now maintained, "as the affirmation of the working class's entry into action, marked a great date in history," but "as an organ of combat and emancipation for the workers, it failed completely at its task" (*Appello*). See also "I nostri propositi, II: l'organizzazione," *L'Associazione* (London), December 7, 1889.

²³ "I nostri propositi, II: l'organizzazione," *L'Associazione* (London), December 7, 1889.

²⁴ "Programma" and "I nostri propositi, II: l'organizzazione," *L'Associazione* (Nice and London), September 6, December 7, 1889.

tinue gravitating toward marginalization was the central issue confronting the movement over the next three years.

THE ANTILEGALITARIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1890

Malatesta's plea for an international revolutionary-anarchist-socialist party was generally ignored and his hopes for anarchist involvement in workers' agitation repeatedly frustrated. In April 1890 he journeyed secretly to Paris, hoping to participate in some kind of revolutionary gesture on May Day. But Paris provided a dismal example of anarchist inertia. The French anarchists did not join the workers in street demonstrations, nor did they utilize the opportunity for a show of force on their own. "Imagine the effect that would have been produced in France and abroad by the news that Paris was in revolt and that the anarchists were in possession of Montmartre or Belleville," Malatesta wrote in a scathing letter to *La Révolte*.²⁵ Instead, "we revealed ourselves to be absolutely nothing as a party of action. . . . nor would we have known how to do anything even if the events had been far more important."²⁶ Malatesta's reproaches were lost on the French anarchists, who surpassed even the Italians in their worship of "autonomy" and "free initiative."²⁷

Despairing of the French, Malatesta turned his attention back to the Italians. To coordinate the activities gathering momentum in Italy, he sought the assistance of Merlino and Cipriani. Merlino was a proven anarchist and a trusted friend, but Cipriani remained an uncertain asset, despite the fact that his reputation as a heroic revolutionary and living martyr could prove enormously valuable to the movement. Although he professed himself an anarchist, Cipriani was capable at any moment of seeking election as a protest candidate or dashing off to fight in a nationalist revolution without perceiving any contradiction.²⁸ Wary of Cipriani's propensity for quixotic adventures, Malatesta had recently attacked him as a "Garibaldian—a Garibaldian in the least intelligent sense of the term," who had shown himself "absolutely incapable of understanding the ideas and the movements of our times."²⁹ What Malatesta demanded of Cipriani was that he cease equivocating on issues like nationalism and elections, and conduct himself in

²⁵ *La Révolte* (Paris), May 10–16, 1890.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Virtually every plea for organization coming from Malatesta and Merlino was opposed by *La Révolte* on the grounds of authoritarianism. See, for example, *La Révolte* (Paris), February 28–March 6, 1891. For the antiorganizationist tendencies of the French anarchists, see Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 165–166, 174.

²⁸ Indeed, in 1897 Cipriani fought against the Turks in Macedonia and ran for election as a protest candidate from the Romagna.

²⁹ *L'Associazione* (London), December 7, 1889.

accordance with his newly professed principles.³⁰ Cipriani's assurances mitigated but never dispelled Malatesta's doubts, and by the spring of 1890 the two revolutionaries began to collaborate.

Malatesta's plans called for a new campaign against parliamentarism. He believed that so long as electoral activity was perceived as a viable method of struggle, the revolutionary energy of the masses would be dissipated through the safety valve of the vote or the useless quest for universal suffrage. During his visit to Paris, therefore, he met with Italian exiles to write an abstentionist manifesto for distribution in Italy before the November elections.³¹ Malatesta urged that Cipriani's name be included, but Galleani opposed the idea, insisting that Cipriani sooner or later would again run as a protest candidate. In his own defense, Cipriani argued that every true socialist in Italy was disillusioned with parliamentarism, and to prove the point he promised to obtain the signature of Andrea Costa.³²

Cipriani's naiveté was as great as his stout heart. Costa in April 1889 had been sentenced to three years imprisonment for his part in a protest demonstration, but he remained immune from arrest so long as the Chamber of Deputies was in session. In March 1890, when the parliamentary session ended and the government authorized his arrest, Costa fled to Paris for safety. Therefore, when Cipriani sought his cooperation, Costa was desperately seeking reelection so he could return to Italy with his parliamentary immunity restored. Signing an abstentionist manifesto was out of the question. Cipriani tried to compensate for his blunder by arranging a personal reconciliation between Costa and Malatesta. The former comrades met, but the subject of their discussion is not known. Shortly thereafter, Costa requested Malatesta's help for his election campaign. Costa, too, was capable of fantasizing.³³

Costa's preoccupation with his deputy's seat actually contributed to the resurgence of his anarchist rivals. Still in Paris in August 1890, he notified his PSRI lieutenants to convene a party congress in Rimini before the national elections. Most Romagnole socialists considered reorganizing and revitalizing the PSRI their main concern. But Costa insisted that top priority be given to socialist participation in parliamentary elections, not party reorganization. He therefore ordered his lieutenants to invite to the congress all socialists and operaisti who accepted the principle of electoral

³⁰ Ibid., December 7 and 21, 1889.

³¹ The manifesto, reprinted by Malatesta in his newspaper *Volontà* (Ancona), November 16, 1919, can be found in Santarelli, *Socialismo anarchico in Italia*, 179–181.

³² Luigi Galleani, *Figure e figure* (Newark, 1930), 187.

³³ Cipriani refers to his attempt at reuniting Malatesta and Costa in *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), June 14, 1890. Malatesta related this episode to Nettlau in 1912. See the latter's *Die erste Blütezeit*, 165. For Malatesta's letter of May 16, 1890, to Costa, rejecting his request, see *Supplemento al N. 1 del Giornale "La Plebaglia"* (Imola), May 25, 1890. See also Gonzales, *Costa*, 329, 332, 338, 343; Lipparini, *Costa*, 259–265.

participation. The anarchists, whom he knew would try to obstruct his plans, were to be excluded.³⁴

Costa's behavior provoked hostile reactions from every quarter. Piselli, who fancied himself the link between different schools of socialism, protested the exclusion of the anarchists. Gnocchi-Viani and the operaisti wanted no part of a congress blatantly intended for electioneering purposes, and they went ahead with plans to hold the POI's next congress in Milan. Prampolini, the evolutionary socialist who exercised great influence among the peasants of the Emilia, notified Costa that he had no faith in congresses and believed no purpose would be served by what Costa proposed. Turati, the leader of the Milan Socialist League, saw no value in a socialist congress that did not have the support of the operaisti. Labriola, the Marxist theoretician, agreed with Turati that the Romagnole congress would only increase the fury of the anarchists by fueling their suspicion of Costa's political ambition. In the end, the PSRI's congress in Ravenna on October 18, 1890, amounted to little more than a local gathering of the faithful; it contributed nothing toward the creation of a unified socialist party.³⁵

With the impending Ravenna congress a predictable sideshow and the operaisti still secluding themselves in Milan, Malatesta was able to steal the thunder from Costa and the legalitarians in September by calling for a national congress open to all socialists. His project was endorsed the following month, at a meeting in Faenza, by some twenty-five antiauthoritarian socialists representing Ravenna, Forlì, Rimini, Imola, and a dozen other towns of the Romagna. They also passed resolutions disapproving the forthcoming PSRI congress and condemning socialist participation in elections. News of the Faenza proceedings aroused great expectations among anarchists inside and outside the Romagna. Malatesta expressed considerable optimism, declaring that the Romagna, after a decade-long torpor induced by Costa's misalliance with parliamentarism, was again demonstrating its revolutionary spirit.³⁶

The myth of a revolutionary Romagna was still widely embraced or at least fostered by the anarchists. Their immediate objective, however, was to deprive Costa and the legalitarians of their parliamentary base in the Romagna, for as Merlino said: "If parliamentarism does not go, the revolution will not come."³⁷ At issue here was not disagreement over methods but a

³⁴ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 298; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), October 4, 1890.

³⁵ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), October 4, 1890; Labriola to Turati, September 5, 1890, in Alessandro Schiavi, ed., *Filippo Turati attraverso le lettere di corrispondenti (1880-1925)* (Bari, 1947), 64; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 299-304.

³⁶ *La Campana* (Macerata), September 21, October 19, 1890; *Supplemento alla N. 36 della Rivendicazione* (Forlì), October 16, 1890; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), November 15, 1890.

³⁷ *Supplemento al N. 12 della Campana* (Macerata), November 16, 1890. Merlino was paraphrasing Giovanni Bovio's famous words to the Mazzinians: "If God does not go, the people will not come."

battle between irreconcilable principles. The antiparlamentarist strategy of Malatesta and Merlino called for all-out struggle against the legalitarians—"a formidable war that will decide the future of socialism."³⁸

If undermining the legalitarians remained the anarchists' real objective, what was the meaning of Malatesta's call for a national congress open to all socialists? Malatesta had not painted any false pictures. Unlike Cipriani and Piselli in the anarchist camp, and Costa and many PSRI militants among the legalitarians, Malatesta never propagated the fiction that genuine unity could be achieved between schools whose methods and principles he believed to be diametrically opposed. On the contrary, since 1884 he had asserted openly that unity should not exist where there was true cause for division. One purpose of the congress, therefore, was to expose the fundamental differences—ideological as well as tactical—that separated the various schools of socialism.³⁹ Merlino had been even more candid, giving the legalitarians about to convene at Ravenna an ultimatum: "liquidate the past" by renouncing the parliamentary tactics of the previous decade. If not, the anarchists would "decisively break away" and rally all the people who were "tired of suffering and of being the laughingstock of the ambitious opportunists."⁴⁰ The first option was an order to commit political suicide, the second a threat of isolation and ruin if they refused. In either case, the demise of legalitarianism was Malatesta and Merlino's only objective.

THE CAPOLAGO CONGRESS

To confuse the police, the anarchists announced publically that the Italian revolutionary socialist congress would convene in Lugano on January 11, 1891, but a secret notice instructed delegates to meet on January 4 at Capolago, a tiny village situated at the base of the mountains facing the southern end of Lake Lugano in Switzerland. In this picturesque setting, some eighty-six participants assembled at the Albergo dell'Aurora for discussions lasting three days. Anarchist groups in more than fifty Italian cities, as well foreign centers such as London, Paris, Marseilles, Lugano, Alexandria, New York, Buenos Aires, and the experimental Cecilia Colony in Brazil were represented. More than two hundred associations gave their official adherence to the congress, one-third of them socialist and operaista (the important Fascio dei Lavoratori of Milan, for example) rather than anarchist.⁴¹

³⁸ Francesco Saverio Merlino, "Socialisme et anarchisme: Le congrès socialiste italien de 'Capolago' (Suisse)," *La Société Nouvelle* 7, pt. 1 (1891): 350.

³⁹ *La Campana* (Macerata), September 21, 1890.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1890.

⁴¹ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), November 8, December 3, 13, 20, 27, 1890, January 3, 10, 1891; *Il Proletario* (Marsala), November 20, 1890, February 6, 1891; Merlino, "Socialisme

Veterans of the International and younger militants of the new generation, the delegates included the most active Italian anarchists of the period: Errico Malatesta, Francesco Saverio Merlino, Francesco Pezzi, Luisa Minguzzi, Amilcare Cipriani, Isaia Pacini, Ettore Molinari, Attilio Panizza, Francesco Cini, Antonio Gagliardi, Arturo Ceretti, Germanico Piselli, Adamo Mancini, Giovanni Rossi, Pietro Gori, Cesare Agostinelli, Galileo Palla, Ettore Gnocchetti, Eugenio Pellaco, Giovanni Bergamasco, Genunzio Bentini, Giuseppe Barbiani, and Giuseppe Bianchi. The most important anarchists absent from the congress were Luigi Galleani, who had been arrested in Geneva and expelled from Switzerland, and Paolo Schicchi, the fierce individualist. As Costa had decreed a boycott of the anarchist congress, only two legalitarian socialists attended: Giuseppe De Franceschi, an engineer from Milan, and Jacopo Danielli, representing the Florentine federation of railroad workers.⁴²

The anarchist movement's three main currents were represented—philosophical, organizationists, and antiorganizationists—but the views of Malatesta and Merlino predominated.⁴³ Participation in electoral contests was condemned as totally irreconcilable with anarchist-socialist principles, and abstentionism was officially endorsed. Revolutionary socialists were urged to conduct antiparliamentary propaganda during elections, to organize boycotts of the ballot boxes, and to dispel the illusions of the masses concerning the efficacy of legislative reform. The two legalitarians abstained on this resolution, while Piselli and a few delegates from the Romagna expressed their reservations, preferring to allow groups to decide for themselves according to local circumstances. Merlino later explained that this resolution was expected to “ignite the battle between abstentionists and parliamentarists” and ultimately undermine the position of socialist deputies in the Romagna. Another resolution aimed at Costa—described as “a

et anarchisme,” 348, by a Comrade who was present [unsigned but written by Malatesta], “The Capolago Congress,” in *Freedom* (London), March 1891; Merlino, “Le congrès de Capolago,” *La Révolte* (Paris), January 31–February 6, 1891. The anarchists of Sicily, because of the great distance and their lack of financial means, could not send a representative; however, over fifty Sicilian militants signed a declaration in support of the congress. The following newspapers also gave notice of their support: *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì); *La Plebaglia* (Imola); *Combattiamo!* (Genoa); *La Campana* (Macerata-Ancona); *Il Proletario* (Marsala-Trapani); *L'Operaio* (Caltanissetta); *La Nuova Riscossa* (Marsala); *Il Piccone* (Catania).

⁴² Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 166; Luis [Luigi] Fabbri, “Crepusculo en Capolago (1891),” *La Protesta* (Buenos Aires), December 27, 1926; Giuseppe Martinola, “Il congresso anarchico di Capolago,” *Bollettino Storico della Svizzera Italiana* 81, no. 4 (December 1969): 184.

⁴³ The resolutions, program, and manifestos adopted by the Capolago congress, all of which are unmistakably the work of Malatesta and Merlino, were published in the pamphlet *Il Congresso di Capolago: Ai socialisti ed al popolo d'Italia* (Castrocaro, 1891). Detailed coverage of the proceedings and resolutions was also published in Piselli's *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), January 10 and 17, 1891.

step in the direction of conciliation"—proposed that all revolutionary socialists who had voted in previous elections insist that socialist deputies abstain in the future from legislative activities and utilize their free railway passes to spread socialist propaganda. If the deputies refused, the revolutionary socialists were advised to denounce them and abstain from participating in future electoral contests. Still another resolution targeted Costa's propensity for electoral alliances, condemning any compromise or temporary union with the irredentists or republicans.⁴⁴

That the Capolago congress would rally behind the antilegalitarian campaign launched by Malatesta and Merlino was predictable. Antiparliamentarism was a basic tenet of anarchism (although frequently violated by moderates like Piselli), and the fight to undermine the legalitarian socialists had been going on for more than a decade. Entirely unforeseeable, however, was the delegates' consenting to the formation of the Partito Socialista Anarchico Rivoluzionario—Federazione Italiana. Given the strength and pervasiveness of antiorganizationist sentiment, endorsement of an anarchist party represented a major step in a new direction. To be sure, concern was expressed over the problem of authority, the nemesis so many anarchists feared lurking within any organization. Nevertheless, the superiority of an organized movement, pursuing common goals in a coordinated manner, was acknowledged, and the Malatestian concept of "anarchistic organization"—organization without hierarchical authority of any kind—was sanctioned by the delegates at Capolago.⁴⁵ Whether the rest of the movement would prove equally receptive to the idea remained to be seen. In any case, the decision to form an anarchist party marked a rare triumph for Malatestian thought and action.

The Capolago congress also called for a general strike to be organized for May Day, 1891. Eager for the Italian anarchists to join the demonstrations and protests that workers were expected to conduct that day, the delegates proclaimed: "It is the obligation of a revolutionary party to take advantage of all occasions for agitation and struggle, and to impart to popular movements as revolutionary a character as possible."⁴⁶ The insistence that anarchists must immerse themselves in the activities of the working masses in order to spur them toward the revolution reflected Malatesta's influence. So, too, did the congress's secret decision to transform the May Day demonstration in Rome into an open insurrection.⁴⁷

Although the obstacles confronting the anarchists were still enormous,

⁴⁴ *Il congresso di Capolago*, 12–14; Merlino, "Socialisme et anarchisme," 349.

⁴⁵ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), January 10, 1891; Merlino, "Le congrès de Capolago," *La Révolte* (Paris), January 31–February 6, February 28–March 6, 1891; *Il congresso di Capolago*, 11.

⁴⁶ *Il congresso di Capolago*, 15.

⁴⁷ Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 166–167; Fabbri, "Crepusculo en Capolago."

the Capolago delegates infused new hope into the movement. Malatesta himself commented on the renewed sense of optimism:

The success of the Capolago congress was complete, not only on account of the resolutions passed, but especially by reason of the enthusiasm and revolutionary spirit which animated the comrades there. Some old comrades, who attended the congress and relived the palmiest days of the International, had to confess that this congress was the most encouraging event they had seen in their lives as socialists.⁴⁸

Within the cyclical pattern of advance and retreat that characterized Italian anarchism throughout its history, Capolago represented the highest point the movement had reached since the heyday of the International.

⁴⁸ By a Comrade who was present [Malatesta], "The Capolago Congress," in *Freedom* (London), March 1891.

DESCENT INTO ISOLATION,
1891–1892

THE ILLUSION OF ADVANCE

For four months after Capolago, local leaders and militants made sincere efforts to create the Partito Socialista Anarchico Rivoluzionario that Malatesta and Merlino had conjured out of the Alpine air. Group after group proclaimed its adherence to the Capolago program, and if some still balked at “formal” organization, the majority responded positively by federating at the regional level. Thus in February and March, regional federations were constituted in the Romagna, Tuscany, Rome, the Maremma (southern Tuscany), and jointly in Liguria and Piedmont. Steps toward federation were also underway that spring in Umbria, the Marches, and the Veneto, but government repression forestalled their realization.¹

While the new anarchist party struggled to get off the drawing board, its founders turned their attention to May Day. Transforming peaceful demonstrations for jobs and the eight-hour day into an insurrectionary upheaval would require extensive preparation and broad popular support, demands sure to put the anarchists to the test. Since press censorship precluded openly calling for insurrection on May Day, the task of rallying support for direct action rested with individual leaders. Malatesta and Merlino could not perform this function because they were still subject to immediate arrest for their 1884 conviction. The burden of propaganda and planning, whether open and general or clandestine and specific to the insurrection, had to be borne by leaders free to move about: Gori, Galleani, and Cipriani.

Pietro Gori and Luigi Galleani were now the most important anarchists active in Italy. Gori had been arrested several times between 1887 and 1890 for his eloquent speeches at workers’ meetings and demonstrations in Livorno, where he had studied. Arrested again for participating in Livorno’s May Day demonstration in 1890, Gori spent more than six months in jail before his conviction was overturned. After attending the Capolago

¹ *La Campana* (Macerata), February 8, March 8, 28, April 5, 18, 1891; *Il Proletario* (Marsala), March 24, August 19, 1891; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), February 7, March 18, 28, April 25, 1891. See also prefect to police chief of Florence, April 1, 1891, and police chief of Florence to police chief of Pisa, April 2, 1891, in ASF, Questura, *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 5.

congress, Gori returning to Italy to open a law practice in Milan and soon established himself as the movement's chief defense counsel.² Galleani, meanwhile, having distinguished himself during the previous two years as the movement's foremost labor spokesman, agitator, and strike leader, left Italy to avoid arrest around the end of 1889. He spent his exile in France and Switzerland, where among others he met Cipriani, the chemist Ettore Molinari, and Elisée Reclus, the famous anarchist geographer who greatly influenced his ideas. Arrested in Geneva while en route to Capolago, Galleani was expelled to Italy, where he was arrested at the border and briefly detained. He returned to Switzerland from Como but arrived too late to participate in the congress.³

Back in Italy, Galleani prepared to carry out the mission for which he and Cipriani had been selected at Capolago. Their assignment, Galleani recalled, was to conduct

a vast tour for propaganda and revolutionary preparation from Piedmont to Sicily, with the particular task of testing the ground, feeling out the best comrades for the seriousness of their activism, binding them together in a solid chain, [and] keeping this network ready to profit from the first opportunity.⁴

Invitations to speak poured in from groups in Lombardy, the Lunigiana, and Sicily, but a lack of funds restricted Galleani to Tuscany only.⁵

Cipriani's activities were also hampered by financial difficulties. After attending a regional congress in the Romagna on February 2, Cipriani spent several weeks in Rimini awaiting the proceeds of a collection drive he claimed netted only twenty lire.⁶ Cipriani canceled his tour in a fit of pique and returned to Paris, but not before blasting the anarchists publicly for their alleged lack of faith and spirit of sacrifice.⁷ This behavior distressed Malatesta, who feared Cipriani's outburst would provide the legalitarians with grounds to preach that only madmen spoke of revolution in Italy. Malatesta believed, moreover, that sufficient funds had been raised in the

² Foresi, *Gori*, 7–9. Gori defended Paolo Schicchi, Court of Assizes of Viterbo (May 16–20, 1893); Camillo Di Sciullo, Court of Assizes of Chieti (April 6, 1894); Luigi Galleani *et al.*, Tribunal of Genoa (May 22–June 8, 1894); and Errico Malatesta *et al.*, Tribunal of Ancona (April 21–28, 1898). Gori's courtroom speeches are given in his *Opere*, vol. 5, and *Scritti scelti*, vol. 2.

³ Masini, "La giovinezza di Luigi Galleani," 451–453; Galleani, *Figure e figure*, 95–88.

⁴ Galleani, *Figure e figure*, 182.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Fedeli, *Galleani*, 59–63; Masini, "La giovinezza di Luigi Galleani," 452–454; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), April 25, 1891.

⁶ Cipriani to Merlino, February 19, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., *CPC*, Errico Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1. Several important letters from Malatesta's CPC dossier have been published in Lorenzo Gestri, "Dieci lettere inedite di Cipriani, Malatesta e Merlino," *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 17, no. 4 (October–December 1971): 309–330.

⁷ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), February 14, 1891.

Romagna for Cipriani's journey, but even so, he was certain that the comrades in every locale would have provided for his needs. "You well know how the Italians are," Malatesta wrote to Merlino, "they do not think to give fifteen *centesimi* in contribution, but if you ask, they will bend over backwards to obtain what you need."⁸ Malatesta also suspected that fear rather than a lack of funds might have deterred Cipriani: "Amilcare told me that he is convinced the government knows everything, . . . and that it awaits the right moment to throw us into prison—in prison, he adds, for ten or twenty years." Malatesta did not discount this possibility, but Cipriani's preoccupation with prison reminded him of the soldier who, before going into battle, thinks too much about the wounds he might receive. "I understand that Amilcare, poor thing, has already suffered too much in prison," he told Merlino, "but those who do not wish to fight must withdraw."⁹

If the Italian authorities had not been privy to the anarchists' plans, they certainly were now. Merlino had been visiting Berlin that February. He did not suspect that the Prussian police were following his every move, but as an added precaution he tore Cipriani's and Malatesta's letters into shreds before discarding them. Not good enough. The agent following him salvaged the pieces and reassembled them for the Prussian minister of the interior, who passed them along to Rome.¹⁰ Thus Italy's prime minister, the Marquis Antonio Starabba Di Rudinì, informed Interior Minister Nicotera on March 19, 1891, that "from the letters of Malatesta and Cipriani, it appears that they, with Merlino, have planned some anarchist exploit, the stage for which apparently will be Sicily and which will be undertaken in April or May of this year."¹¹

Indeed, with plans for May Day evidently stalled, the anarchists looked to Sicily, the island of millennial discontent, for an opportunity to spark an uprising that would ignite the peninsula. Reports from local militants had convinced Cipriani as early as the autumn of 1890 that a popular upheaval in Sicily was brewing.¹² In February 1891, after "alarming letters" indicated that younger Sicilian militants were spoiling for a fight, Cipriani became fearful that premature action would destroy what little the anarchists had achieved in Sicily. Cipriani proposed, therefore, that he go to Sicily to reconnoiter the terrain, impede any marginal undertaking that

⁸ Malatesta to Merlino, February 29, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., *CPC*, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ President of Prussian police to minister of state and interior minister, March 10, 1891 (in Italian translation), *ibid.*

¹¹ Foreign minister to interior minister, March 19, 1891, *ibid.* Di Rudinì was also minister for foreign affairs.

¹² Cipriani to Nicola Petrina, October 17, 1890, in Salvatore F. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani* (Bari, 1959), 385.

might provoke repression, and send for Malatesta and Merlino if the situation proved genuinely opportune.¹³ Malatesta, too, had been notified that the Sicilian anarchists intended to rebel, with or without outside assistance. Unlike Cipriani, he viewed the prospect favorably and suggested to Merlino that they consider taking action themselves, as soon as circumstances permitted.¹⁴ But Malatesta was working in London and could not leave, and Merlino was preparing to battle the social democrats at the Second International's Brussels congress that August. Thus Cipriani would have to oversee the situation alone and in person—and not merely because of promising developments in Sicily. Concerned over the poor impression Cipriani had made by abandoning his propaganda tour in a huff, Malatesta insisted that, “if he wants to rectify his misdeed, [Cipriani] must return to Italy and travel about *even on foot*.”¹⁵

Cipriani obeyed, arriving in Sicily on March 18 and touring the island for several weeks. He received a frenzied welcome in every city he visited, for in Sicily the legendary fame of the ex-Garibaldian and Communard was known even among the most downtrodden. Wherever he spoke to workers' organizations, his message was the same: “I know you are strong. I urge you to unite, organize, and wait for events to mature. As your fathers fought for Italian unity, you must prepare yourselves for the social revolution.”¹⁶

Cipriani left Sicily with his hopes and his fears confirmed. A popular explosion on a grand scale was definitely in the making—the *Fasci Siciliani* of 1893–1894. The anarchists, to their credit, had correctly perceived that the peasants of Sicily were in a state of imminent rebellion, and they did so, moreover, well before the pundits of legalitarian socialism. Cipriani was equally certain, however, that an uprising now would end in disaster because the revolutionary forces were unprepared. Explaining that premature action would only benefit their enemies, Cipriani urged local leaders to bridle their passions and wait for the right moment to revolt. But time was one advantage the anarchists did not possess.¹⁷

MAY DAY: ROME, 1891

Only the anarchists hoped the May Day demonstrations would precipitate a general strike or an insurrection. The evolutionary socialist Camillo Prampolini, following the German social democrats, suggested that it would be

¹³ Cipriani to Merlino, February 19, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., *CPC*, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. I.

¹⁴ Malatesta to Merlino, February 29, 1891, *ibid*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ Quoted in S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26, 385–386; police chief to king's prosecutor in Rome, May 21, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., *UR*, b. 2; *Il Proletario* (Marsala), April 23, 1891.

"more practical" if the workers' celebration were held on the first Sunday of the month, rather than on May 1.¹⁸ What Prampolini wanted was to minimize the threatening character of May Day—a Sunday celebration would not require a work stoppage—and reduce the likelihood of repression. Malatesta saw through Prampolini's "mystification," and attacked the proposal as another instance of the legalitarians' desire to suffocate the revolutionary ardor of the people. May Day was not about palliatives but revolution: "And if this year we cannot make May Day the beginning of the revolution, then we will make it serve as the prologue to revolution."¹⁹

The May Day demonstration scheduled to take place in Rome posed the greatest danger to the authorities. Thousands of construction workers were unemployed, and with no relief in sight, their mood was likely to be rebellious. As a precautionary measure, the government transported eight thousand unemployed workers back to their native provinces in March.²⁰ The additional presence of eight thousand angry men probably would not have changed the outcome, but their absence on May Day weakened the element over which the anarchists had major influence. The relationship between the anarchists and the Roman unemployed had been a source of continuing concern for the authorities. "Having been left the absolute masters of the workers' agitation," the police chief later reported, "they strove to exploit it for their own interests."²¹

Actually, the Roman anarchists had done little to exploit their influence, and when Cipriani arrived on April 16 to confer with the local anarchist federation, effective leadership of the workers had already passed to moderate elements. Although some of the Roman militants recommended deeds rather than words, Cipriani, with his now habitual caution, urged restraint. On the eve of the demonstration, the anarchist federation of Rome finally agreed that direct action was impossible. The events that transpired on May Day, therefore, were completely unplanned.²²

On the afternoon of May 1, 1891, several thousand workers, representing various labor associations, had gathered in the Piazza Santa Croce di Gerusalemme to await the speakers. At 3:30 P.M., thousands more marched into the piazza, including the members of the anarchist federation, with their banner trimmed in red. "The appearance of the Federazione Anarchica," the police chief noted, "stimulated immediate excitement in the crowd." The piazza, meanwhile, had been surrounded by hundreds of sol-

¹⁸ *La Giustizia* (Reggio Emilia), no. 235 [date not given], quoted by Malatesta in *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), April 11, 1891.

¹⁹ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), April 11, 1891.

²⁰ Antonio Labriola to Friedrich Engels, March 30, 1891, in Antonio Labriola, *Lettere a Engels* (Rome, 1949), 13.

²¹ Police chief to king's prosecutor in Rome, May 14, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., UR, b. 2.

²² Cafagna, "Anarchismo e socialismo a Roma," 767–770.

diers and mounted cavalry. Upon seeing the armed forces, members of the Società dei Muratori shouted: "Long live the Italian army!" To this the anarchists retorted: "Long live the revolutionary army!" and "Down with bayonets!" When Cipriani arrived at 4:00 p.m., he was greeted with thunderous applause and cries of "Long live our God!" "Long live the Colonel of the Commune!" "Long live the noble prisoner of Portolongone!" The crowd grew silent as Cipriani rose to speak:

Today you are gathered here to affirm the vindication of your rights. But we are surrounded by a forest of bayonets. . . . I say to you painfully: today we are not ready to fight, for if you dare to move you will be massacred. . . . Today is not the moment that you hoped for. If tomorrow you are willing, come not with banners but with something more decisive in your hands.²³

Not all the anarchists were convinced by Cipriani's appeal for calm. At that moment, an unscheduled speaker—Galileo Palla, the Tuscan anarchist who had been with Malatesta in Argentina—leaped to the platform and began to harangue the crowd:

It is useless to continue to lose ourselves in chatter. Revolutions always have been made without discussions and without committees. . . . Everything depends on seizing the moment; and it may be tomorrow, today, or whenever you want.²⁴

Ending his impromptu speech with a cry of "Long live the revolution!" Palla leaped into the crowd, urging the workers to fight. And they did. Using any weapon or available object, the workers gave a good account of themselves in the ensuing melee, but repeated charges by the cavalry swept the piazza clear. The rioting spread quickly to other districts of Rome and was not quelled until several hours later. By the end of this May Day, one police official lay dead and a dozen more were injured. The demonstrators suffered at least one fatality and several hundred wounded, including Cipriani and the republican deputy Salvatore Barzilai. Then came the arrests, hundreds of them.²⁵

²³ Police chief to king's prosecutor in Rome, May 14, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., UR, b. 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.; *Il Proletario* (Marsala), May 7, 1891. Because Palla, under the name "Venerio Landi," had arrived from Paris just a few days before May Day and was unknown to the local anarchists, many believed he was an agent provocateur. Even Cipriani (who should have remembered Palla from various meetings in Paris between May 1890 and the Capolago congress, but perhaps chose not to admit that he was an anarchist) spoke as though he believed him to be in the pay of the police. Suspicions about Palla ceased when Malatesta identified him as one of the bravest and most devoted comrades he knew. Labriola to Engels, May 3, 1891, in Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, 16; *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), May 9 and 23, 1891; *La Campana* (Macerata), May 27, 1891.

MALATESTA IN PURSUIT OF REVOLUTION

Other cities with an active subversive element—Ancona, Bologna, Florence, Forlì, Genoa, Messina, Milan, Naples—experienced May Day demonstrations, too. In some places, like Florence, where the anarchists had gathered in strength, the ensuing melees were big and violent. Yet the collective impact of the May Day demonstrations failed to generate the shock waves that Malatesta hoped would still be convulsing Italy when he and Giuseppe Consorti came ashore at Viareggio on May 4. After making their way to Pisa, where they were hidden by comrades and given money, they went by horse and wagon to Livorno, and then by train to Prato, Massa, Carrara, and Florence. Malatesta exercised extreme caution as he moved about, using a disguise and false identification papers. Throughout his journey Malatesta generally met only with a handful of trusted comrades at isolated locations or within safe hiding places. Outside of Carrara, however, Malatesta spoke at a large secret meeting, where according to one witness: “The audience became so enthusiastic that they wanted to descend into the city and start the revolution! It took all Malatesta’s persuasive logic to dissuade them from trying.”²⁶

The Italian authorities had known in advance—not only from the spy operating in Malatesta’s London group but from reports compiled by Scotland Yard—that Malatesta would return to Italy seeking to transform the May Day demonstrations into revolution. Baron Nicotera, back in office as interior minister, was determined to apprehend Italy’s most dangerous malfattore at all costs.²⁷ The police traced Malatesta’s movements from Tuscany to the Romagna and were closing in by the time he arrived in Forlì on May 28. They might have apprehended him there if Piselli had not

²⁶ *L’Aurora* (Yohogany, Pa.), September 15, 1900, quoted in Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in Massa-Carrara*, 146. For Malatesta’s itinerary, see “Itinerario del Malatesta nel viaggio del 1891.” A reconstruction of Malatesta’s trip compiled by Roman police officials, this document sometimes conflicts with reports submitted by local authorities: Pisa prefect to interior minister, May 25, 1891; Livorno prefect to interior minister, May 26, 1891; Italian consul at Bellinzona (Ticino) to foreign minister, June 16, 1891. ACS, Min. Int., *CPC*, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

²⁷ One spy (he signed his reports “A. Calva”) was in close contact with Malatesta’s good friend Francesco Prodi and was able to obtain accurate information. See his letters of April 29, 30, May 2, 1891, to the Italian ambassador, Count Giuseppe Tornielli. See also the report (in Italian translation) of the Metropolitan Police, Department of Criminal Investigation, Scotland Yard, London, April 27, 1891. Tornielli’s report of April 29, 1891, to the foreign minister, which accompanied the Scotland Yard document, contains this postscript: “I urge in a special way secrecy about the note from the Metropolitan Police, an exceptional document because it is customary for the English police not to investigate the political conduct of foreigners. And in any case, they do not communicate the information they possess to foreign governments.” ACS, Min. Int., *CPC*, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

facilitated his escape.²⁸ Malatesta eluded the police again a few days later in Rimini, prompting an infuriated Nicotera to berate the local prefect: "If vigilance had been kept and if the investigation had been conducted diligently, Malatesta certainly would have been tracked down and arrested in Rimini."²⁹ Putting more distance between himself and his pursuers, Malatesta made a final stop in Milan. There, for some reason, he became less cautious, even permitting himself to be seen with several old comrades in public places. According to Nicotera's report, Malatesta strolled past police headquarters in broad daylight and even asked the carabinieri for directions.³⁰ Surely Nicotera came close to experiencing apoplexy when he received a telegram from the Italian consul in Geneva on June 10, announcing: "Malatesta passed through Milan on route to Como and Lugano, where he is presently to be found."³¹

Once in Lugano, where he took refuge with Isaia Pacini, Malatesta lambasted his Italian comrades for their ineffectual response to the May Day demonstrations: "We must be ashamed of our inertia, ashamed that we allowed ourselves to be caught by surprise in an uprising foreseen and advertised for almost a year, and ashamed that while we always speak of revolution we do little or nothing to enable ourselves to wage it."³² Drawing consolation from the fact that the people in Rome and Florence had demonstrated fighting spirit, Malatesta urged his comrades to redouble their activities and seize any opportunity for action.³³ Most likely, he was planning to return from Switzerland to reconnoiter Sicily and southern Italy, or to prepare an uprising in Rome that would coincide with the trial of the May Day demonstrators.³⁴ But the Swiss police discovered his whereabouts and arrested him on the night of June 11–12 for violating an expulsion decree of 1879. The Italian authorities, who had instigated the action, immediately started extradition proceedings on the pretext that Malatesta was still wanted for his 1884 conviction as a malefactor.³⁵ Their real motive was more immediate. Eager to convince the Italian public that the May Day

²⁸ Interior minister to prefects of Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì, and Ravenna, May 26, 1891; also Bolletino N. 2208: "Anarchici Italiani," June 13, 1891, from Italian consul in Geneva to foreign minister. Ibid.

²⁹ Interior minister to prefect of Forlì, June 9, 1891, *ibid.*

³⁰ Interior minister to prefect of Milan, June 18, 1891; Italian consul in Geneva to foreign minister, June 13, 1891. Ibid.

³¹ Italian consul in Geneva to interior minister, June 10, 1891, *ibid.*

³² *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), May 23, 1891.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Italian consul in Geneva to foreign minister, June 13, 1891; Forlì prefect to interior minister, June 2, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., CPC, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

³⁵ Italian consul in Bellinzona to foreign minister, June 16, 1891; interior minister to minister of justice, June 12, 1891; minister of justice to interior minister, June 16, 1891. Ibid.

disorders were the result of an anarchist conspiracy hatched by Malatesta at Capolago, the government intended to place him on trial with Cipriani and the Rome rioters, designating him chief instigator.³⁶

But Rome was cheated out of its star defendant. Brought before the District Tribunal of Lugano on July 21, 1891, Malatesta heard himself eloquently defended—by the Italian Swiss (Ticino) prosecutor. This reluctant officer of the court delivered a heated attack against the government and judiciary of the Swiss Confederation, as well as against those neighboring states whose officials habitually meddled in Swiss affairs. The Italian government's depiction of Malatesta as a malefactor, argued the prosecutor, was an affront. Malatesta was an honest man being persecuted for his beliefs, just as in former times other political figures had been persecuted and driven to seek refuge on Swiss soil. "If it were up to me," he declared, "I would free Mr. Malatesta and offer him a banquet of pheasants and partridges in the middle of the Piazza della Riforma." However, lest the people of the Ticino incur the wrath of their Teutonic confederates, "we are forced to do the master's bidding. . . . Therefore, we judge and condemn Malatesta, not as Ticinesi, but solely as the executors of the Confederation's orders." Malatesta could have received the maximum penalty of two years as a second offender, but on July 22 the tribunal sentenced him to serve forty-five days imprisonment (minus the forty days he had already spent in jail) and to pay a fifty lire fine.³⁷

Completion of sentence did not secure Malatesta's freedom. The Federal Tribunal of Lausanne, at the behest of Rome, now ordered that he be held in custody pending a decision on the Italian government's request for extradition. Fears were growing, meanwhile, that the Italian authorities might still get their man, even if extradition were denied. Since expulsion from Switzerland would be automatic in Malatesta's case, the all-important factor was geography. The Swiss police might expel Malatesta the same way they had expelled Galleani less than a year earlier—across the Italian frontier into the welcoming arms of the carabinieri. The local anarchists, suspecting collusion between the Swiss and Italian authorities, launched a campaign on Malatesta's behalf aimed at arousing public opinion against such an indirect violation of Switzerland's traditional right of exile. Secretly, Pacini and other Italian exiles were contemplating a coup de main to liberate Malatesta if the Swiss tried to hand him over to the Italians. On September 12, however, the Federal Tribunal of Lausanne refused to grant extradition.

³⁶ Rome police chief to interior minister, June 16, 1891, *ibid.*; police chief to king's prosecutor in Rome, May 14, 1891, and his follow-up report of May 21, 1891, in ACS, Min. Int., *UR*, b. 2.

³⁷ The address of the public prosecutor was taken down verbatim by the Italian Consul in Bellinzona, and long passages are quoted in his report to the foreign minister, July 22, 1891, in ACS, *CPC*, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

Malatesta was then escorted to the frontier at Saint Louis, near Basle, and expelled onto French soil. He reached the safety of London a few days later.³⁸

POST-MAY DAY REPRESSION

Speaking before the Chamber of Deputies on May 4, 1891, Interior Minister Nicotera assured his colleagues that "not only Rome, but all Italy is tranquil." The culprits responsible for the May Day disorders—the anarchist malfattori—were safely under lock and key:

Of the 300 (a few more or a few less) anarchists who took part in the action at Rome the other day, 229 are in jail. (*Comments*) Does it seem few to you? (*Laughter*) If it seems few, I can assure you that no one will escape the action of the authorities and the law. (*Laughter*)

... I can add that at this very moment, it would be difficult to find an anarchist in Rome. Indeed, not only in Rome, but in Livorno, in Turin, in Naples (*Laughter*), and in other cities. (*Comments*)³⁹

The laughter that accompanied Nicotera's assurances belied the concern and anger that permeated the Chamber of Deputies in the wake of May Day, 1891. More afraid than ever of a revolt of the masses, Italy's political leaders were determined to crush the revolutionary threat they perceived the anarchists to represent. Most had no qualms about how this objective might be accomplished. So, once again, it was more expedient to portray and attack the anarchists as dangerous miscreants bent on destroying society rather than as political subversives trying to lead oppressed workers and peasants in revolt.

Moderate elements among the liberals and democrats (Giolitti, Sonnino, Cavallotti) denied any possible link between anarchists and workers.⁴⁰ Conservative deputies (Di Camporeale, Santini) depicted the anarchists as criminals lusting for rapine, destruction, and murder.⁴¹ Nearly all agreed with Nicotera's view that anarchism was not a genuine political philosophy, and that the right of assembly and other liberties guaranteed by the constitution should not extend to "men who do not fight for a principle or for an

³⁸ The manifesto "Alla Stampa e al Popolo Svizzero" by Gli Anarchici Svizzeri (Chaux-de-Fonds), August 16, 1891; Milan prefect to interior minister, July 18, 1891; foreign ministry to interior ministry, September 13, 1891; Como prefect to interior minister, September 14, 1891. In ACS, Min. Int., CPC, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

³⁹ AP, meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1739.

⁴⁰ Ibid., meeting of May 3, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1705; meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1729, 1743.

⁴¹ Ibid., meeting of May 3, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1690–1703, 1712–1713; meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1733–1735.

idea, but for the delight of destroying society.”⁴² Nicotera had the overwhelming support of the Chamber of Deputies, therefore, when he announced his determination to use “article 248” against the anarchists. The infamous provision of the “reformed” penal code of 1889, inspired by Zanardelli, enabled the state to prosecute the anarchists as an association of malefactors with even greater facility than before.⁴³

Only one man in the Chamber of Deputies challenged Nicotera’s policy toward the anarchists—Giovanni Bovio. The old republican philosopher observed that, despite Nicotera’s talk about liberty, he “ended by putting a group of citizens outside the law: the anarchists.” He also chided Nicotera by recalling that the interior minister had once been Pisacane’s comrade-in-arms, and that he, Crispi, and many other former revolutionary democrats turned guardians of the Savoy Monarchy had once stood outside society and the law: “To you, honorable minister, I will seem like an anarchist, just as you did to [the Bourbon King] Ferdinand II!”⁴⁴ But Bovio’s historical parallel was completely lost on Nicotera and his colleagues. Prime Minister Di Rudini spoke for the great majority of deputies when he rejected Bovio’s plea for “liberty for all”:

when the honorable Bovio tells me: we desire that full and absolute liberty be given to the anarchists, just as it is permitted to any other order of citizens; here disagreement begins—and it is profound disagreement. (*Good! Bravo! Strong approval.*)⁴⁵

The trial of Cipriani, Palla, Calcagno, and fifty-nine other important May Day demonstrators—most of them anarchists—began on October 14, 1891. They were charged with having constituted an association of malefactors.⁴⁶ More than thirty attorneys, among them Vittorio Lollini and Filippo Turati, took up the defense. Eventually, 325 witnesses, including

⁴² Ibid., meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1739.

⁴³ Ibid., 2:1736. Article 248 read as follows: “When five or more persons associate for the purpose of committing crimes against the administration of justice, the public trust, the public safety, the morals and order of the family, or against persons or property, each of them is punished for the sole fact of the association with imprisonment from one to five years” (*Il Codice Penale*, 162).

⁴⁴ AP, meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1746. The irredentist Matteo Renato Imbriani attempted to defend the moral character of Cipriani but was brusquely interrupted and censured for his pains. Mirabelli also gave a fine speech in defense of liberty without concerning himself specifically with the anarchists. Ibid., meeting of May 3, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1707–1712, 1717.

⁴⁵ Ibid., meeting of May 4, 1891 (Session of 1890–1891), 2:1748.

⁴⁶ The best account of the Rome trial is given in Labriola’s *Lettere a Engels*, 19–28, 37–40, 44–45, 48–49 passim. See also Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 261–265. A first group of about one hundred workers were condemned to light jail sentences or fines shortly after the event. A second group of fifty-one workers, tried before a criminal tribunal on July 17, received sentences totaling around one hundred years.

Bovio, Labriola, and Costa, testified on behalf of the defendants. The anarchists, interrogated as to the nature of their political beliefs, attempted to transform the courtroom into a forum for propaganda, proudly acknowledging their philosophy and rejecting the state's right to judge them. Soon the exchanges between defendants and judges grew so heated that the president of the tribunal lost control over the proceedings and adjourned. The trial resumed on February 18, 1892, with a new president. The courtroom drama reached a climax on March 12, when, according to Labriola, "the police chief was crucified for five hours."⁴⁷ He was forced to concede that several delegates who attended the Capolago congress and subsequent gatherings were spies, that the whole idea of an anarchist conspiracy had been hatched by the police after May 5, and that a compromising document concerning the interior minister had been removed from the trial materials. Despite these revelations, a verdict of guilty was pronounced on March 25. The anarchists, save for a handful, were condemned to sentences totaling over seventy-five years of imprisonment, thirty-two years of surveillance, and almost twenty thousand lire in fines. Cipriani and Palla received the stiffest penalties: two years and eight months incarceration.⁴⁸

Conviction of the anarchists had been a foregone conclusion. What surprised everyone was the tribunal's having set aside the charge of association of malefactors, and substituting that of "delinquent association against the public order," a political crime under articles 247 and 251 of the penal code.⁴⁹ The habitually cynical Labriola was encouraged by this decision and notified Engels that "this is the first time in Italy that socialists and anarchists have come under a political heading [*sic*]. The judges demonstrated courage."⁵⁰

In reality, the tribunal's failure to convict under article 248 did not constitute a precedent recognizing the legitimacy of anarchism as a political philosophy and movement. Legal confusion, not greater tolerance, was responsible for the unexpected decision. The issue was clarified when the Court of Cassation overruled the tribunal on November 24, arguing that "anarchist societies are to be considered associations for the commission of crimes, in that they intend as their objective the overthrow of society and the destruction of the state."⁵¹ The original charge was reinstated and the defendants condemned on that basis.⁵²

⁴⁷ Labriola to Engels, March 13, 1892, in Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, 48.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 261–264; *La Campana* (Macerata), April 6, 1892.

⁴⁹ *L'Amico del Popolo* (Milan), April 10, 1892; *La Plebe* (Florence), March 27, 1892.

⁵⁰ Labriola to Engels, March 25, 1892, in Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, 49.

⁵¹ Quoted in Giulio Trevisani, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1965), 2:205n. 20.

⁵² Merlino, *Politica e Magistratura*, 367.

THE INDIVIDUALIST BACKLASH

The government crackdown provoked by the May Day demonstrations nullified the organizing campaign initiated after the Capolago congress and stimulated a backlash from the individualists. As in the past, repression provided cause and catalyst for the movement's worst and most self-defeating tendencies. Just as the antiorganizationist current had arisen from the organizational ruin and spiritual demoralization of the International, now the individualist current derived sustenance and stature from this latest round of repression and defeat. While individualists like Pini had constituted a small and peripheral element in the late 1880s, those who emerged during the travails of the early 1890s were far more numerous and influential, securing an important niche in the movement as self-appointed guardians of antiauthoritarianism and free initiative. The only activity they really performed was to hamstring the advance of the movement, and they continued to do so until checked by the revival of organizationist initiative under Malatesta's leadership in 1897.⁵³

With Pini imprisoned on Devil's Island, the most important individualist of the period was the Sicilian Paolo Schicchi.⁵⁴ Born into a wealthy family in 1865, Schicchi studied law before being conscripted into the army in 1888. His intractable spirit rebelled at the harsh treatment meted out by his officers and he deserted, "to avoid suicide or the firing squad."⁵⁵ A legalitarian socialist when he fled to Paris, Schicchi became an anarchist after meeting many Italian exiles, such as Galleani, and several leaders of the French movement, including Sebastien Faure and Elisée Reclus. The key to his conversion, however, was Jean Grave's *La Révolte*.⁵⁶

While the influence of French anarchism undoubtedly contributed to his aversion for organization, what made Schicchi the avatar of anarchist individualism was his wild temperament and propensity for violence, characteristics attributable to some measure of mental imbalance.⁵⁷ In *Pensiero e*

⁵³ Besides Paolo Schicchi, the most famous individualists of 1889 to 1897 belonged to the London group known variously as the Gruppo dell'anonimato and the Individualisti, which was the successor to the Gruppo Intransigente active in Paris from 1887 to 1889. Luigi Parmeggiani was its best-known figure. Fabbri, *Malatesta: L'uomo e il pensiero*, 177–179; Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 233.

⁵⁴ For Schicchi, see the laudatory biography by Renato Souvarine, *Vita eroica e gloriosa di Paolo Schicchi* (Naples, n. d.), and Luigi Molinari, *Paolo Schicchi* (Milan, 1893).

⁵⁵ Schicchi's statement during his trial of May 16–20, 1893, in *Resoconto del processo avanti la Corte d'Assise di Viterbo contro Schicchi Paolo imputato di mancato omicidio e di vari attentati politici* (New York, 1925), 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12–13; Souvarine, *Schicchi*, 22–23. According to Souvarine, Faure described Schicchi to Elisée Reclus as "a magnificent acquisition for the Italian anarchist movement."

⁵⁷ The late Raffaele Schiavina (alias Max Sartin), longtime editor of *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* in New York, and the late Professor Gino Cerrito, both of whom knew Schicchi personally, confirmed this observation in discussions with the author. Cerrito indicated that among

Dinamite, one of three newspapers he published in exile in 1891, Schicchi wrote: "In order for the Social Revolution to triumph completely, it is necessary to destroy in its entirety this race of thieves and murderers called the bourgeoisie. Women, old men, babies—all must be drowned in blood."⁵⁸

When not extolling the need to liquidate the bourgeoisie, Schicchi concentrated his wrath on Malatesta and Merlino. His primary objective—and that of the entire individualist current—was to undermine every idea and project advanced by these anarchist leaders. The Capolago congress, which he did not attend, had sent Schicchi into such a rage that he threatened to shoot Malatesta.⁵⁹ Publically, he denounced Malatesta and the organizationists for their "Byzantinism." Anarchists meeting in "sacred conclave," Schicchi declared, represented "the most grotesque, most nauseating spectacle imaginable." Congresses were "absolutely contrary to the spirit of anarchist ideas" and represented "only a phase of parliamentarism." The International, he insisted, had taught that congresses generate a host of authoritarian tendencies and deflect the proletariat from the true struggle. The only way to avoid following "the legalitarian rabble into putridness," Schicchi declared, was to pursue "action à outrance . . . a gladiatorial war without mercy."⁶⁰

The tirades occasioned by the Capolago congress were just a warm-up exercise for the strident vituperation Schicchi unleashed against organization and collective action after the May Day debacle. If the best police minds in the world had tried to invent some method to shatter the anarchists' ranks and make them appear ridiculous in the eyes of the masses, they could not have found a better means than the "masquerade of May Day," Schicchi declared. The disaster in Rome had resulted from "the mystification of the legalitarians [who] invented it [May Day], the ignorance of certain anarchists who accepted it, and the cretinism of a few high priests of anarchism [Malatesta and Merlino] who preached it to the four winds." Rebellion on a preassigned date was "an absurd strategy, a nonsensical revolutionary tactic."⁶¹ A more effective "expenditure of energy," Schicchi believed, was the kind associated with explosives. And he, unlike most individualists, had the courage of his violent convictions. On April 28, 1891, Schicchi planted a

comrades Schicchi was affectionately referred to as "il pazzo siciliano." See also Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, 235.

⁵⁸ *Pensiero e Dinamite* (Geneva), July 18, 1891. His other newspapers were entitled *La Croce di Savoia* (Geneva) and *El Porvenir Anarquista* (Barcelona), the latter written in Spanish, Italian, and French.

⁵⁹ Malatesta to Merlino, February 29, 1891, in ACS. Min. Int., CPC, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1. Malatesta found the threat amusing.

⁶⁰ *Il Proletario* (Marsala), January 5, 1891.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, December 2, 1891.

bomb (made only with black powder to avoid harming innocent victims) outside the barracks of a cavalry regiment in Palermo, to protest Nicotera's threat to use cavalry against May Day demonstrators. On October 3, 1892, he targeted the Spanish Consulate in Genoa for a similar bomb attempt, this time to avenge the physical torture he and several comrades had suffered at the hands of police in Barcelona. Again, he used a weak charge in order to spare some workers who lived nearby. When finally tracked down in Pisa, Schicchi did not hesitate to shoot one of the policemen seeking to arrest him. Sentenced to more than eleven years of imprisonment at his trial in Viterbo in May 1893, Schicchi cried out to the jury: "You are sheep! Long live anarchy!" A subsequent trial added another year to Schicchi's sentence for insulting the jurors.⁶²

An individualist far more typical of the breed was one Attilio Curzii. May Day, according to the latter, was a ridiculous "masquerade" organized by the bourgeoisie. Whoever supported the workers' holiday was an "opportunist" or a "spy." Touting the belief that persecution was the inevitable price for organization and collective action, Curzii argued that May Day had served no function other than to reveal the identity of the revolutionaries to the police chief. Fatalistic as well as paranoid, he insisted that dreams of revolution in the present were "for the Arcadian poets, if not to say madmen." Before the revolution could be proclaimed in the piazzas, it was necessary to develop popular consciousness and prepare for the great struggle. But whereas Malatesta urged his comrades to accomplish these objectives by going among the people, Curzii recommended that anarchists stay home and "propagandize among their children, relatives, and friends."⁶³

The attitudes stated or implied in Curzii's pronouncements reflected how easily the movement's worst tendencies could resurface in times of adversity, complementing government repression as a cause of decline. Whereas the Capolago congress had stimulated resurgence, marked by endorsement of anarchist organization and renewed activism, the May Day debacle precipitated contraction, with intransigence, amorphousness, and passivity re-emerging as the movement's dominant characteristics. Party building all but ceased, and the few attempts to federate were vigorously opposed. The Partito Anarchico Rivoluzionario Italiano essentially vanished by the end of 1891, its demise as much the result of anarchist self-defeatism as police persecution.⁶⁴

⁶² *Risoconto del processo avanti la Corte d'Assise di Viterbo contro Schicchi Paolo*, 7–14, 43, 46.

⁶³ *Il Proletario* (Marsala), November 4, 1891.

⁶⁴ The only organizational effort undertaken after May Day occurred in August 1891, when various groups formed a federation in Bologna and endorsed the Capolago program. *Il Proletario* (Marsala), September 9, 1891. That same month, however, the Circolo di Studi Sociali of Orbetello denounced a call for a Tuscan anarchist congress. *La Croce di Savoia* (Geneva), August 25, 1891.

ANARCHIST-SOCIALISTS COUNTERATTACK

The organizationists, now using the term *socialisti anarchici* to differentiate and disassociate themselves from the individualists, were quick to counter-attack. Eugenio Pellaco, a militant young anarchist from Genoa who had attended the Capolago congress, challenged the individualists with the ringing cry, "Into the piazza, he who has heart!" He rejected Curzii's idea of "preparing" for the revolution by staying home as contemptuous—"that is the place for cowards." Voicing Malatesta's theme, he insisted that "wherever the people are to be found, that is where the anarchist must be, ready to propagandize and to fight." Nor, as the individualists maintained, should anarchists abstain from participating in popular demonstrations organized by the bourgeoisie or the legalitarian socialists. The revolution would never come "without being preceded by small skirmishes, without having the ground covered with earlier victims." Pellaco dismissed the individualists as hopeless fanatics fit only to snipe at those anarchists who would act:

He [Curzii] is certainly a victim of that sad craze, prevailing in some circles, to hurl mistrust at everyone and everything. Nothing is anarchist enough for these people. If they continue in this manner it will be necessary to ask them for a license in order to be called an anarchist. They see spies, plain clothesmen, policemen, and mystifiers everywhere. They live in the midst of fantasies and end up advocating a life fit only for monks, fossils, and conspirators.⁶⁵

As the polemics between rival currents intensified, Malatesta and Merlino entered the debate in May 1892 with the publication of *Nécessité et bases d'une entente*. This pamphlet, written by the Merlino with a preface by Malatesta, was their opening salvo in a protracted struggle to restore rational thinking and behavior and to redirect anarchists in Italy and Europe toward revolution. The time had come, Malatesta warned, to put aside the simplistic notions about the revolution and the future society that had lulled anarchists into a state of passive expectation, and to confront the hard realities facing them. Above all, the anarchists had to reach some measure of consensus on questions of organization and tactics in order to end their isolation and reestablish ties with the masses.⁶⁶

Merlino's critique was unsparing: "Anarchy has not always been well treated by its followers. Like socialism, recently reduced to minimum proportions over questions of work hours and minimum salary, anarchy has been diminished, disfigured, and rendered unrecognizable." The primary culprits were the individualists: those who rejected organization, relied on historical destiny to bring about the revolution, exalted deeds of violence.

⁶⁵ *Il Proletario* (Marsala), November 4, 1891.

⁶⁶ Malatesta's preface to Merlino, *Nécessité et bases d'une entente* (Brussels, 1892), in Merlino, *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario*, 89n. 1.

and thought only of themselves. Merlino was particularly concerned about the individualists' growing infatuation with expropriationism and terrorism, "deeds which have always been committed in reaction to social injustices but cannot destroy them, because they are not directed against the causes of these injustices." Attacks against prominent personages did not amount to struggle against the principle of authority; nor did individual attacks against property constitute a blow against the institution of private property. Merlino, like Malatesta, believed that expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a class, was a necessary function of the social revolution. Expropriating the bourgeoisie one at a time, however, was another matter. Merlino rejected theft as inherently bourgeois. Most of the anarchists who committed this form of individual action he considered disreputable and untrustworthy, capable of fitting in among the bourgeoisie as exploiters of the people. He also pointed out that the expropriationists were isolated from the masses and exercised no influence over them; nor could they ever, since the masses would neither approve nor imitate their behavior. In the case of Pini, for whom most anarchists felt personal sympathy, Merlino concluded that the harm done to others and to himself far outweighed the importance of the few manifestos and newspaper issues published with the proceeds of his robberies.⁶⁷

Merlino's concerns about anarchist expropriationism were justified. The practice had not ended with the imprisonment of Pini or his more famous French predecessor Clément Duval. On the contrary, the phenomenon had become fairly widespread in France, where some of its practitioners, not satisfied with robbing from the bourgeoisie, went so far as to engage in *vol entre camarades* or *estampage* (theft among comrades).⁶⁸ Yet, in the last analysis, for all its egoistic and corrupting propensities, expropriationism was far less threatening to the anarchist movement than terrorism.

The year 1892 marked the beginning of Ravacholism (named after the French terrorist Ravachol) and the era of the attentat. Thereafter no anarchist could ignore the moral and practical questions terrorism posed. For Malatesta and Merlino the central issue revolved around violence and the sanctity of human life. Although convinced that bourgeois society could not be transformed except through violent revolution, they viewed individual violence and terrorism in the manner of Ravachol as another matter entirely.⁶⁹ The revolutionary, Merlino explained, could use violent means,

⁶⁷ Merlino, *Nécessité et bases d'une entente*, in *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario*, 92. See also his article "False interpretazioni," *Il Grido degli Oppressi* (New York), August 4, 1892, also in *Concezione critica*, 111–112.

⁶⁸ Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France*, 167–177; Nettlau, *Die erste Blütezeit*, 212–235.

⁶⁹ In addition to bombing the homes of the judge and prosecutor who convicted May Day demonstrators the previous year, Ravachol had robbed graves and murdered several elderly people for their money. Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France*, 195–202.

but "he must know how to use it so as not to create unnecessary victims, so as not to increase, under the pretext of curing, the evils and pain of poor humanity."⁷⁰ Malatesta was appalled less by Ravachol's deeds, which he considered the result of brutalizing poverty, than by the callous rationalizations offered in his defense. Malatesta observed that many anarchists, like soldiers in war, had become drunk and ferocious from the struggle, wanting blood for its own sake. "It is no longer love for humankind that guides them," he lamented to Luisa Minguzzi, "but the sentiment of vengeance united with the cult of an abstract idea, a theoretical phantasm"—anarchy.⁷¹

Expressing these sentiments publicly in the French anarchist newspaper *L'En Debors* (Paris), Malatesta reminded his comrades that anarchists were not fighting for the triumph of a vague abstraction. Just as he despised the Italian patriot who did not care how many Italians died so long as Italy became great, so, too, did he despise "the comrade who confesses himself indifferent to the massacre of three-quarters of mankind so that Humanity might be free and happy."⁷² Violence was unavoidable, but anarchists should never surpass the limits of necessity. Anarchists, he insisted, "must be inspired and guided by sentiments of love, love for all men," because "love is the moral foundation, the soul of our program." A brutal rebellion might be inevitable, and might even topple the existing system, but

if it does not find a counterpoise in the revolutionaries who strive for an ideal, such a revolution will devour itself. Hate does not produce love, and with hate the world cannot be renewed. The revolution of hate, either will fail completely, or will produce a new oppression that could even call itself anarchical . . . but would not be any less oppressive for this fact, and it would not fail to produce the effects that every oppression produces.⁷³

The advice and criticism offered by Malatesta and Merlino made no impression whatever on the individualists. On the contrary, throughout the summer of 1892, the two leaders were the target of constant attack from them. Leading the assault was one Amilcare Pomati, Italian correspondent for *La Révolte*, who accused Malatesta and Merlino of every conceivable transgression: evolving into and preaching alliance with legalitarian socialists; compromising the very character of anarchism by advocating false and dangerous tactics, such as organization and congresses; and being accom-

⁷⁰ "False interpretazioni," in *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario*, 112.

⁷¹ Malatesta to Luisa Minguzzi, April 4, 1892, in ACS, Min. Int., CPC, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 1.

⁷² "Un peu de théorie," *L'En Debors* (Paris), August 17, 1892.

⁷³ Ibid. Throughout the violent 1890s, Malatesta remained very critical of terrorist acts that harmed innocent people and proved counterproductive to the movement. See his articles "Errori e rimedi," *L'Anarchia* (London), August 1896; "Schiarimenti," *La Questione Sociale* (Paterson), January 15, 1897; "La Tragedia di Monza," *Cause ed Effetti—1898-1900* (London), September 22, 1900.

plices to bourgeois repression for having criticized the deeds of Pini and Ravachol.⁷⁴

Merlino had been quicker to recognize the futility of trying to influence the individualists. In *Nécessité et bases d'une entente*, he argued that just as the anarchists had separated from the legalitarian socialists, the time had now come for a complete break with the individualists: "Nothing joins us. It is evident that, since they permit neither organization nor collective action, we have nothing to accomplish together."⁷⁵ Malatesta, always more tolerant and flexible than Merlino, finally acknowledged in September 1892 that "the error we committed at Capolago was not to take account of the differences [between anarchist socialists and individualists] and to believe that we could all march together because we were in agreement about general formulas."⁷⁶

It could not have been otherwise. The gulf separating Malatesta and Merlino from extremists like Schicchi and Pomati was unbridgeable. They could not engage in meaningful dialogue because they existed on different levels of consciousness, with conflicting perceptions of reality. Obsessed with the notion that persecution and authoritarianism were the inevitable outcomes of organization and collective action, the individualists held aloof from the serious labors of the movement. These self-righteous crusaders against authority—who were themselves the most unrelenting authoritarians—rarely ventured forth save to hurl anathemas against those who thought or acted differently. So long as blind opposition was their automatic response to every idea and project generated by the movement's best minds, Italian anarchism would remain divided and weak—a high price to pay for "free initiative."

THE LEGALITARIAN TRIUMPH: THE GENOA CONGRESS

Severely factionalized by ideological disputes and debilitated by repression, the anarchists were no match for the legalitarian socialists when the showdown between them finally came at the Genoa congress in August 1892. The antilegalitarian campaign, which Malatesta and Merlino hoped would reorient Italian socialism toward revolution, had failed. In fact, except for Malatesta and Merlino and their supporters, most anarchists had contributed little to the campaign. The individualists on the left of the movement had done nothing more than heap invectives upon the legalitarians, as though words alone would suffice to convert the working class to absten-

⁷⁴ See Pomati's letters in *La Révolte* (Paris), *Supplément Littéraire au Numéro* 46, 48, 50, August 13–19, August 27–September 2, and September 3–9, 1892.

⁷⁵ *Concezione critica del socialismo libertario*, 93.

⁷⁶ *La Révolte* (Paris), *Supplément Littéraire au Numéro* 49, September 3–9, 1892.

tionism. Even more derelict were the philo-Costians on the right, led by Piselli.

Influential in the Romagna, where the antilegalitarian campaign had focused, Piselli fancied himself the "connecting link" between orthodox anarchists and Costian socialists.⁷⁷ In the past, this had translated into electoral support for socialist candidates, particularly Romagnoles, such as Costa and Alessandro Balducci.⁷⁸ Prior to Capolago, Malatesta had urged Piselli to cease equivocating on the issue of elections: "Either parliament or the revolution."⁷⁹ At Capolago, however, Piselli and his supporters proposed that anarchist groups should have the right to adopt a policy toward elections that suited local conditions.⁸⁰ The congress's executive committee denounced Piselli as a charlatan for professing abstentionism in theory but violating it in practice.⁸¹ Despite the censure, Piselli continued to affirm his position, declaring that the Costians would find a comrade in him, because "they too are revolutionaries and not total legalitarians or evolutionists."⁸² Nothing could deflect Piselli from his eclectic propensities, and without the support of his newspaper, *La Rivendicazione*, the anarchists' campaign to unseat Costa was ineffective.⁸³

But even had Piselli cooperated with Malatesta and Merlino, the outcome of the antilegalitarian campaign would have been the same. The theory that the Romagna's revolutionary spirit would resurface if Costa and legalitarianism were defeated erred on two accounts. First, the anarchists overestimated the revolutionary potential of the Romagna. In the province of Forlì, where the anarchists outnumbered the socialists, the prefect did not even consider them dangerous, because they lacked organization, good leaders, and, above all, money.⁸⁴ Second, the anarchists had concentrated their efforts in the wrong place. The upsurge of legalitarian socialism that would soon result in party unity and isolation for the anarchists was gathering momentum not in the towns of the Romagna, but principally in Milan and Lombardy. Costa's attempts to organize a national party around his PSRI had failed, and after the disastrous Ravenna congress of October 18, 1890, the initiative passed decisively to Filippo Turati and the Marxists of the Milan Socialist League.

Turati's goal was to create an Italian socialist party devoted to the gradual conquest of state power. Through the Milan Socialist League established in

⁷⁷ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), October 4, 1890.

⁷⁸ See his advice to the voting workers of Forlì in *ibid.*, November 21, 1890.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, December 6, 1890; *Il Proletario* (Marsala), November 27, 1890.

⁸⁰ *Il congresso di Capolago*, 12.

⁸¹ *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), January 17, 1891; Merlino, "Socialisme et anarchisme," 353.

⁸² *La Rivendicazione* (Forlì), January 10, 1891.

⁸³ *La Plebaglia, Supplemento al N. 1* (Imola), May 25, 1890; *La Rivendicazione* (Imola), January 17, 1892.

⁸⁴ Gonzales, *Costa*, 353n. 65.

1889 and the journal *Critica Sociale*, which he founded in 1891, Turati sought to convert the labor movement to socialism, unite all socialist currents except the anarchists into a single school of "scientific socialism," and attract new support for socialism and the workers' movement from among the bourgeois intellectuals, particularly radical democrats. After the PSRI and the POI failed to accomplish anything significant at their respective congresses in 1890, Turati seized the opportunity to press for his program at the Milan workers' congress of August 2–3, 1891.⁸⁵

Every socialist and labor current was represented at the congress. Leadership of the now moribund POI divided along three lines: Giuseppe Croce, who favored union with the socialists; Costantino Lazzari, who was similarly disposed but remained constrained by corporatist inclinations; and Alfredo Casati, who continued to be an intransigent defender of worker exclusivism. Casati found allies in the anarchists, who were represented at the congress by Gori, Galleani, and Giovanni Domanico. The radical-democratic wing of the labor movement was represented by Antonio Maffi, a collectivist republican, and by Luigi De Andreis, an orthodox Mazzinian. Turati, however, was the dominant force. Easily overcoming opposition from the anarchist-operaista alliance, Turati secured approval for the formation of a Partito dei Lavoratori Italiani, which would include all the worker societies represented at the congress. A commission including workers and intellectuals was selected to draft the party program.⁸⁶

The Milan gathering represented a major step toward the formation of an Italian socialist party. But Turati and his associates had yet to accomplish the goal that Marxist leaders of the Second International considered the sine qua non of their preliminary work: the exclusion and isolation of the anarchists.⁸⁷ Encouraged by the expulsion of the anarchists from the Brussels congress (August 16–23, 1891), Italian Marxists now hastened to deal with the despised descendents of Bakunin on their own soil. On the eve of the great confrontation, Anna Kulisciov, now Turati's companion, wrote to her former lover, Costa: "Are you coming to the Genoa congress? You would do well to come; we will have to withstand a ferocious battle with the anarchists."⁸⁸ But the anarchists showed no enthusiasm for the confrontation.

Even if he had wished to participate, which apparently was not the case,

⁸⁵ For Turati, see Spencer Di Scala, *Dilemmas of Italian Socialism: The Politics of Filippo Turati* (Amherst, 1980).

⁸⁶ Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 315–332; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 197–203; Luigi Cortesi, *La costituzione del partito socialista italiano* (Milan, 1962), 31–38.

⁸⁷ James Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914* (New York, 1966), 56–76.

⁸⁸ Kulisciov to Costa, July 26, 1891, quoted in Cortesi, *Costituzione del partito socialista italiano*, 100.

Malatesta could not leave London to attend a congress on Italian soil because he was still subject to arrest. Merlino, who also would have been at risk, was visiting the United States, where he founded *Il Grido degli Oppressi* and *Solidarity* (published in English) in New York and conducted a lecture tour throughout the country that concluded with a stay of several months in Chicago. Responsibility for attending the congress and devising a strategy, therefore, was assumed by the movement's new leaders—chiefly Galleani, Gori, Pellaco, and Domanico. The editor of *Tribuna dell'Operaio* (Florence-Prato), Domanico still clung to the illusion that anarchists and legalitarians might coexist within the same party despite different tactics, and he urged the anarchists to prepare seriously for the Genoa congress and attend in force.⁸⁹ Galleani and Gori, on the other hand, were half-hearted in their preparations. Reluctant to attend a congress he considered useless, Galleani nevertheless conferred with Gori to formulate a “plan of attack” against the legalitarians, which in reality proved little more than obstructionism.⁹⁰

No meaningful contribution could be expected from most other anarchists. The individualists who published *L'Ordine* in Turin, opposed in principle to socialist and workers' congresses, expressed disinterest in the forthcoming event, but later covered the proceedings.⁹¹ Their counterparts in Livorno, who published *Sempre Avanti!*, advocated obstructionism: “All revolutionaries . . . understand on their own that in the present case what matters most is to impede the formation of a *Legalitarian Party*.”⁹² The irrepressible Pomati denounced the congress as “a land of plenty for the charlatans.”⁹³

Some three hundred delegates, representing an even greater number of workers' associations, convened at the Sala Sivori in Genoa on August 14, 1892. The various socialist and labor factions aligned as they had done the previous year at the Milan workers' congress. The legalitarians were led by Turati, Kulisciov, Prampolini, and Leonida Bissolati. Their principal allies were the former POI leaders Croce, Lazzari, and Cabrini, now prepared to collaborate fully with bourgeois socialists. A dissident minority of operaisti, led by Casati, still held out for an apolitical labor party composed exclusively of “calloused hands.” As at the Milan congress, the intransigent operaisti sided with the anarchists for the immediate purpose of thwarting Turati's designs. Chief spokesmen for the anarchists were Gori, Galleani, Domanico, and Pellaco. The middle ground between the anarchists and the

⁸⁹ *Tribuna dell'Operaio* (Florence-Prato), July 16, 1892. See also his memoirs, written under the pseudonym “Le Vaghe,” *Un trentennio nel movimento socialista italiano: Reminiscenze e note storiche* (Prato, 1910), 31–32.

⁹⁰ Galleani, *Figure e figure*, 97.

⁹¹ *L'Ordine* (Turin), August 20, 1892.

⁹² *Sempre Avanti!* (Livorno), August 6, 1892.

⁹³ *La Révolte* (Paris), *Supplément Littéraire au N. 44*, July 30–August 5, 1892.

Marxist/POI coalition was occupied by Costa, his Romagnole socialists, and the eclectic Monticelli. The radical-democratic wing of the labor movement was once again represented by Maffi.⁹⁴

Delegate interaction was bound to be heated. The major confrontation occurred on the afternoon of August 14, when Pellaco requested that discussion of the party program and statutes be postponed until the following day in order to permit further study of the matter. Scores of delegates immediately accused the anarchists of premeditated obstructionism. "We do not want tyranny! Out with the despots!" shouted Turati. Galleani demanded to know the reason for such an insult. By now all the delegates were on their feet shouting, some of them nearly coming to blows. After a measure of calm was restored, Prampolini pleaded for a final separation between socialists and anarchists:

For years and years, since the rise of the socialist party in Italy, we have fought continuously among ourselves. . . . I do not say that one or the other is in bad faith. . . . You are as honest as we, but it is indisputable that this struggle exists . . . , and that is because we are two essentially different parties, traveling over two absolutely different roads. There can be no community between us, therefore leave us in peace.⁹⁵

Prampolini's suggestion that the anarchists and the socialists convene separately the next day stirred Gori to protest: "We are in the minority, but we demand the right to bring our propaganda among you. Why do you push us out the door? Wherever you are, there we will follow you."⁹⁶ Gori's threat prompted an angry retort from Turati:

You will not follow us. We will not push you out the door. However, we are tired of you and we will separate. Your "liberty" is violence against us. Your propaganda we know from memory. For twenty years we have read it in your newspapers, and you have not convinced us. Allow us the liberty of being what we are. . . . For you we are reactionaries; for us you are reactionaries, because you draw us away from the shortest path to the revolution.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ For the Genoa congress, see Cortesi, *Costituzione del partito socialista italiano*; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 208–217; Rigola, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 118–123; Manacorda, *Movimento operaio italiano*, 336–354; Trevisani, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 2:213–224; Gaetano Arfé, *Storia del socialismo italiano, 1892–1926* (Turin, 1965), 9–22; *Genova 1892: Nascita del partito socialista in Italia* (Milan, 1952). Most secondary accounts rely heavily upon the minutes published in contemporary newspapers: the Marxist *Lotta di Classe* (Milan), August 20–21, 1892; the Costian *Il Moto* (Imola), August 21, 1892; and the anarchist *L'Ordine* (Turin), August 20, 1892. All three versions are reproduced in Cortesi, *Costituzione del partito socialista italiano*, 270–294.

⁹⁵ *Lotta di Classe* (Milan), August 20–21, 1892.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Following Turati's plan, the Genoa congress divided into two separate meetings the following morning, August 15. The majority of delegates, who accepted electoral struggle as the means to conquer political power, met with Turati, Prampolini, Kulisciov, Lazzari, and other legalitarians at the Sala dei Carabinieri Genovesi. The anarchists and the Casati operaisti, numbering around eighty delegates, continued to hold their sessions at the Sala Sivori. Several veteran socialists like Costa and Monticelli, who had hoped for a reconciliation between all factions, became disgusted at the unexpected turn of events and withheld their support from both meetings. The future of Italian socialism, however, would be determined in the Sala dei Carabinieri Genovesi.

Turati and his allies accomplished their objectives. Having forced a public split with the anarchists, they legalized the divorce by founding the Partito dei Lavoratori Italiani, renamed the Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori in 1893, and finally the Partito Socialista Italiano in 1895. What transpired in the Sala Sivori was decidedly anticlimactic. Once the parliamentary socialists withdrew from the field, the alliance between anarchists and operaisti lost its *raison d'être*. The anarchists had come to Genoa only to prevent the passing of Italian socialism and labor into the legalitarian camp. The Casati-led faction of operaisti was seeking the reconstitution of the POI on a national basis. Yet from this temporary marriage of convenience was born another Partito dei Lavoratori, albeit one with a program and statute tailored far more to the operaisti than to the anarchists.⁹⁸

This party could not survive. Galleani opposed its formation from the outset. Gori, who together with Casati was responsible for its creation, had seized upon the idea merely to retaliate against the legalitarians. He himself never joined it. Malatesta stated that he would not have supported the Gori-Casati creation had he been present. He believed that while anarchists must work directly with the masses, the trade union and anarchist movements should remain separate. The individualists, of course, rejected this hybrid party out of hand as a threat to individual initiative, to anarchy itself. Within a few months of its inception, nothing more was heard of the anarchist-operaista party. Very soon the anarchists would wish the same might have been said of the Italian socialist party born in the Sala dei Carabinieri Genovesi.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Cortesi, *Costituzione del partito socialista italiano*, 174–178.

⁹⁹ Borghi, *Malatesta*, 75–76; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 216; *L'Ordine* (Turin), August 20, October 1, 1892.

1892–1900

THE GENOA CONGRESS was a watershed for Italian anarchists and socialists alike. Turati and his allies successfully accomplished what Malatesta and the anarchists had sought to do but failed. By creating the Partito dei Lavoratori Italiani (PLI; later PSI) and excluding the anarchists, the legalitarians formalized the schism that had long existed with Italian socialism, crystallizing the polarity between the parliamentary and antiparliamentary approaches and accelerating the isolation and decline of their rivals. The legalitarians had been gaining strength since Costa's *svolta* of 1879 and the suffrage reform of 1882, but the creation of a national unitary party provided the prestige and momentum for the rapid takeoff of parliamentary socialism throughout the rest of the 1890s.

Thereafter, the anarchists could not keep pace with the socialist party in the competition for middle- and working-class support. For Italian intellectuals in the 1890s, anarchism lacked the novelty and appeal of Marxism, which—as Benedetto Croce observed—“won over all, or almost all, the flower of the younger generation.”¹ Anarchism continued to attract new recruits from the disaffected middle class, but the number of bourgeois intellectuals and professionals that supported the PSI was vastly greater. In fact, the PSI attracted not only greater numbers of new affiliates from the middle class than did the anarchists, but the percentage of party membership derived from the bourgeoisie was significantly higher in the PSI than among the anarchists.²

But the fact that the anarchist movement was proportionately more working-class than the PSI did not translate into commensurate influence over Italy's labor organizations. At the time of the Genoa congress, anarchism had several thousand followers among organized workers, and some militants even held positions of leadership in important workers' associations. For example, the anarchists would soon control the Chambers of Labor in Carrara and be strongly represented in those of other cities such as Ancona and Bologna.³ Nevertheless, the majority of anarchists still remained indifferent to the labor movement and refused to join or cooperate

¹ Benedetto Croce, *A History of Italy, 1871–1915* (New York, 1963), 148. See also Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia*, 106–114.

² Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia*, 213.

³ *Ibid.*, 211; Rigola, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 118.

with workers' associations, regarding them as fronts for the political ambitions of the authoritarians or as threats to free initiative. The propaganda campaigns and labor agitation conducted by a handful of men like Galleani and Gori could neither create nor sustain a mass following in the absence of a coherent program to draw the anarchists closer to the workers and the labor movement.⁴ Thus the new labor institutions which arose in the 1890s—the Chambers of Labor, leagues of resistance, and federations—developed primarily under the aegis of the PSI.⁵

Despite the impressive strength legalitarian socialism would acquire after the formation the Partito dei Lavoratori Italiani, the Genoa congress did not—contrary to some historians—“sign the death certificate of the anarchist party.”⁶ The anarchist movement in the 1890s was still very much alive, its resiliency and combativeness once again ensuring survival even in the face of repression on an unprecedented scale. Following the Genoa congress, the Marxist ideologue Antonio Labriola grudgingly acknowledged to Friedrich Engels that “here in Italy, the so-called anarchists are beginning to stir once again.”⁷ Malatesta had exhorted the anarchists to reconstitute the federations destroyed by the mass trials that resulted from the May Day demonstrations. Many of the convicted anarchists had served their sentences, and the period of compulsory police surveillance for the others had expired. Anarchist newspapers were “regathering courage.” Disgust over the recent Banca Romana scandals fostered the impression of impending rebellion, and here and there symptoms of anarchist agitation were manifesting. The biggest spur to the anarchists' renewed activity, Labriola noted, was “the illusion [*sic!*] of a coming revolt in Sicily.”⁸

The Sicilian worker and peasant associations known as the Fasci dei Lavoratori had attracted thousands (the official figure of three hundred thousand is vastly exaggerated) of members and supporters since their inception in 1891. The socialist and anarchist leaders of the fasci had intended them as instruments for economic and political agitation, and for around two years they conducted strikes against landlords, many of them

⁴ These observations were offered by Malatesta and his editorial staff in *L'Agitazione* (Ancona), October 28, November 4, 1897.

⁵ For the rise and composition of the PSI and the development of the labor movement in the 1890s, see Rigola, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 157–162; Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia*, 129–142; Trevisani, *Storia del movimento operaio italiano*, 2:206–316; Artè, *Storia del socialismo italiano*, 9–57; Alexander De Grand, *The Italian Left in the Twentieth Century: A History of the Socialist and Communist Parties* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), 8–14; James Edward Miller, *From Elite to Mass Politics: Italian Socialism in the Giolittian Era, 1900–1914* (Kent, 1990), 11–25; Louise A. Tilly, *Politics and Class in Milan, 1881–1901* (New York and Oxford, 1992).

⁶ Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 216.

⁷ Labriola to Engels, July 1, 1893, in Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, 107.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 107–108.

successful. By the end of 1893, however, the fasci lost control over their followers as the economic situation became desperate. Strikes against landlords escalated spontaneously into mass demonstrations protesting high taxes, and then into full-scale rebellion. Every social strata, from landless peasant to lower- middle-class proprietor, participated. The uprising saw thousands of Sicilians destroy tax records, customs houses, town halls, and other public properties that symbolized state oppression.⁹

Although many Sicilian socialists — Giuseppe De Felice Giuffrida, Nicola Barbatto, Bernardino Verro — considered the rural proletariat to be the fulcrum for social regeneration, northern Italian Marxists were suspicious of the southern peasantry and initially indifferent toward the fasci. In July 1893, Labriola had dismissed “all this Sicilian stuff” as “*romagnolismo* [a supposedly traditional tendency toward violence popularly associated with Romagnoles] of the worst sort,” and the fasci as “labors of fantasy.” “Nothing will happen,” he predicted, “except some rural thievery and some killing of carabinieri.”¹⁰

Anarchist leaders, such as Merlino, Malatesta, and Cipriani, had correctly anticipated as far back as 1890–1891 that a major social crisis in Sicily was about to erupt. Their problem was how to exploit it for revolutionary purposes. Little help was forthcoming from most of their comrades. The antiorganizationists on the mainland had been overwhelmingly hostile to the fasci since their inception, denouncing them as fronts for the electoral ambitions of legalitarian socialists and radicals.¹¹ The Sicilian antiorganizationists were similarly antagonistic, although in the west-coast cities of Marsala and Trapani this animosity was partly due to the anarchists’ having been barred from the local fasci by the legalitarians.¹² The situation varied in the island’s other cities. In Palermo the anarchists had played a significant role in the development of the fasci, but after the formation of the PLI its legalitarian leaders expelled them. In Catania, where the fascio’s socialist leader, De Felice, advocated collaboration with the anarchists, the latter played a minor role and were never expelled. In Messina, anarchists were the principal leaders of the fascio, although their participation in local elections made them suspect to the orthodox. The south-eastern town of Vittoria had one of the few fasci directed exclusively by anarchists.¹³

⁹ For comprehensive studies of the Sicilian Fasci dei Lavoratori and the upheavals of 1893–1894, see S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*; Massimo S. Ganci, *I Fasci dei Lavoratori* (Caltanissetta and Rome, 1977); Francesco Renda, *I Fasci Siciliani, 1892–1894* (Turin, 1977).

¹⁰ Labriola to Engels, July 1, 1893, in Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, 108.

¹¹ *Sempre Avanti!* (Livorno), October 28, November 4, 1893; *L’Ordine* (Turin), June 10, December 23, 1893, January 13, 1894.

¹² *L’Uguaglianza Sociale* (Marsala), July 9–10, 1892; *Sempre Avanti!* (Livorno), November 4 and 18, 1893; Salvatore Costanza, “I Fasci dei Lavoratori nel Trapanese,” *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 6 (November–December 1954): 1016–1017.

¹³ S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*, 21–23, 30–32, 35–38, 188–189; Massimo Ganci, “Il movimento dei Fasci nella provincia di Palermo,” *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 6 (November–

Although their role in the *Fasci dei Lavoratori* was secondary, the Sicilian anarchists were important participants in a revolutionary scheme De Felice hatched in September 1893. His plan called for the formation of a network of revolutionary *fasci* on the mainland that would launch an insurrection when Sicily exploded in rebellion. Since the Marxist leaders of the *Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori* (1893) were opposed to insurrectionary tactics and would rather abandon the Sicilians to their fate than jeopardize the party, De Felice's only collaborators were revolutionary socialists not subject to party dictates, a handful of radicals and republicans, and the anarchists. Cipriani, fresh out of prison, promised De Felice his full cooperation and urged comrades in the Romagna to organize a league of action that would arise at the given signal. But in December Cipriani withdrew his support, fearing that the government knew their plans and was poised to strike. De Felice met with other members of the *Fasci dei Lavoratori*'s central committee on January 3, 1894, hoping to win approval for his plan. However, the very day the *fasci* leaders rejected any attempt at revolution, the new premier, Francesco Crispi, placed Sicily under martial law, ordered the army class of 1869 to active duty, and dispatched forty thousand troops to the island to suppress the rebellion. The *fasci* were dissolved, leaders arrested, and nearly two thousand demonstrators deported to *domicilio coatto*.¹⁴

While the leaders of the socialist party commiserated with the Sicilian victims of Crispi's repression, the anarchist quarrymen and sawmill workers of the Lunigiana rebelled in solidarity with them. No revolutionary strategy was devised and no signal for revolt ever given. Quarry workers from the hill towns went out on strike on January 13 in order to hold a protest demonstration in Carrara. Skirmishes with *carabinieri* occurred before they reached their destination, and within a matter of hours a full-scale revolt was in progress and spreading to the surrounding area. Thousands of workers became involved, but the rugged terrain and isolation of the towns thwarted coordination. The anarchist insurrection took the form of sporadic attacks by bands, numbering from several dozen to a few hundred, against local *carabinieri* barracks, excise tax stations, and other symbols of the state. Victory proved as baffling as defeat, and the insurgents never exploited their initial success to good advantage. The decisive encounter occurred on January 16, when four hundred demonstrators who attempted to march on Carrara were fired upon by awaiting troops and dispersed. The

December 1954): 843–849; Gino Cerrito, "Il processo di formazione e lo sviluppo dei *Fasci dei Lavoratori* nella provincia di Messina," *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 6 (November–December 1954): 951–995; 963–965, 974–975, 983–984.

¹⁴ S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*, 395–415, 471–480; Domanico, *Un trentennio nel movimento socialista italiano*, 34–35; Gaspare Nicotri, *Storia della Sicilia nelle rivoluzioni e rivolte*, 4th ed. (New York, 1934), 190–191; Francesco Crispi, *Politica interna: Diario e documenti*, ed. Thomas Palamenghi-Crispi (Milan, 1924), 293, 305–308.

insurrection was over. That same day Crispi placed the Lunigiana under martial law and gave his military commander orders to crush the anarchists in this region once and for all.¹⁵

With Sicily and the Lunigiana reconquered and repressive measures threatening elsewhere, the time was hardly propitious for additional insurrectionary endeavors. But that is exactly what Malatesta, Merlino (who had returned to London at the beginning of 1893), and their French comrade Charles Malato wanted to encourage.¹⁶ They had declared in a manifesto of November 1893 that the only alternatives to the moral and economic despair afflicting Italy were social revolution or terrible reaction. Therefore, they urged the anarchists to organize revolutionary fasci, provoke agitation, prevent the government from sending troops to Sicily, and extend revolt from one end of the peninsula to the other, so that the soldiers would have to choose between their leaders and the people. "The people everywhere are ready for the insurrection. It awaits the signal. Let the audacious give it!"¹⁷

The three leaders had been caught off guard by the events of early January, but despite the unfavorable situation, they proceeded with their quixotic scheme. Merlino was to operate in the south, Malatesta in central Italy, and Malato in the north. Merlino's efforts ended quickly with his arrest in Naples on January 30. He spent the next two years in prison for his 1884 conviction. Malatesta remained in hiding for several weeks at Ancona, now a major anarchist center, and helped local comrades publish *Art. 248* in January 1894. By the end of February or early March he escaped to London. Malato formed a band of a dozen comrades from Biella and set off into the mountains in February to wage guerrilla warfare. But after a few days of wandering around in the fog, they disbanded and Malato escaped to England.¹⁸

In his article "Let Us Go To The People," published in *L'Art. 248*, a disappointed Malatesta blasted the anarchists for their inactivity and warned that unless they corrected their weaknesses they were doomed to

¹⁵ For the rebellion and repression, see Mori, *Lotta sociale in Lunigiana*, 192–209; Gestri, *Capitalismo e classe operaia in provincia di Massa-Carrara*, 154–165; Bernieri, *Cento anni di storia sociale a Carrara*, 150–162; the series of articles by Ugo Fedeli in *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* (New York), December 22, 1951, January 12, 19, February 2, 1952; also Fedeli, "Luigi Molinari e gli avvenimenti del gennaio 1894 a Carrara," *Volontà* 4, no. 6 (November–December 1952): 971–978.

¹⁶ Cipriani had originally been included in their plans, but he withdrew in anticipation of defeat.

¹⁷ Quoted in S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*, 424–425.

¹⁸ Charles Malato to Armando Borghi, n.d., in Borghi, *Malatesta*, 100; Domanico, *Un trentennio nel movimento socialista italiano*, 38; *Freedom* (London), March 1894; Naples prefect, "Cenno biografico," May 26, 1896, in ACS, Min. Int., CPC, Francesco Saverio Merlino: b. 152, fs. 25648; Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 99; spy report ("A. Calvi"), February 16, 1894, in ACS, Min. Int., CPC, Malatesta: b. 286, fs. 31568, sf. 2; Charles Malato, *Les joyeusetés de l'exile* (Paris, 1897), 109–136.

repeat the same errors. He diagnosed the principal cause of their dilemma as isolation from the masses. Reiterating much that he had already said in *L'Associazione*, Malatesta explained that since the International's dissolution, most anarchists had lost contact with the people, withdrawing into small groups that engaged only in polemics with each other and/or the legalitarian socialists. Those who undertook serious work were resisted tenaciously by the intransigents, who elevated isolation to a principle. The timid and the indolent found in this "theory" of isolation a convenient excuse for avoiding risks and doing nothing. The intransigents believed that joining a labor association or organizing workers was practically treason, since workers' organizations possessed officers, regulations, and nonanarchists among their members—all harbingers of authoritarianism. More recently, the anarchists had demonstrated these intransigent attitudes by opposing or ridiculing the fasci. Yet they continued to talk endlessly about the revolution:

Revolution that, preached thus, becomes like the paradise of Catholics: a promise of the hereafter to come that anesthetizes you in blissful inertia so long as you believe, and that makes you a skeptic and an egoist once the faith leaves you. . . . This is a deadly policy that amounts to suicide.¹⁹

The Italian anarchists had thus become prisoners of their own Weltanschauung, powerless to threaten the bourgeoisie and the state. How ironic, therefore, that they should have become the chief victims of bourgeois hysteria and state power. Crispi's onslaught against the anarchists made all previous campaigns of government repression appear tame. A protodictator whose political persona combined raving paranoia and Machiavellian manipulation, Crispi dismissed the explanation, advanced by his predecessor Giovanni Giolitti, that the upheaval in Sicily had been caused by economic distress. What loomed behind the popular tumults, according to Crispi, were the sinister forces of anarchism and socialism, conspiring to destroy the nation, private property, and the family. The principal agents of this conspiracy, he insisted, were the socialist leaders of the fasci, the anarchists, their "clerical associates," and the governments of France and Russia, who were bent upon wresting Sicily away from Italy.²⁰

Repression became the order of the day after the upheavals of January 1894 were quelled. In Sicily, where public opinion favored the defendants, the military tribunals handed down relatively light sentences—two to three years—for the anarchists who had participated in the fasci. Others who had been placed under ammonizione were sent to domicilio coatto. The anarchists fared much worse in the Lunigiana, where 208 military trials of

¹⁹ *L'Art.* 248 (Ancona), February 4, 1894.

²⁰ Speeches to the Chamber of Deputies, February 21 and 28, 1894, in *Discorsi parlamentari di Francesco Crispi*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1915), 3:680–696 passim; also Crispi, *Politica interna*, 310–314.

quarry workers yielded 464 convictions, with sentences ranging between one and thirty years. Additional arrests were made throughout the mainland, and convictions for constituting an association of malefactors rose sharply. Most of the movement's newspapers were suppressed between January and March, and the lone survivor was gone by July.²¹

Yet Crispi was not satisfied with the repressive machinery available to him. "In Sicily, in Italy," he lamented, "the means of resistance are lacking."²² A few weeks later, however, the anarchists gave him ostensible cause to demand more potent means. On June 16, Paolo Lega attempted to assassinate Crispi, but the prime minister escaped unharmed. Not so lucky was the president of France, Sadi Carnot, who was stabbed to death by Sante Caserio on June 24.²³ The image of the Italian anarchists as the new nemesis stalking Europe's chiefs of state provided Crispi with a pretext to demand exceptional legislation for their suppression. Since this "new enemy against society" was "outside of ordinary laws," Crispi assured the Chamber of Deputies that "whatever provisions you enact against him will always be legitimate." He pressed for "an effective law . . . that can destroy this pestilence that spreads among the people, and against which the defensive weapons of all the governments of the world are ready."²⁴

On July 19, 1894, parliament passed three exceptional laws governing explosives, newspapers, and crimes against public order and safety that would remain in effect until December 31, 1895. The most important was the third, which empowered provincial commissions to condemn anarchists to domicilio coatto for up to five years by means of administrative procedure rather than criminal adjudication.²⁵ During the next two years, perhaps three thousand anarchists—among them Agostinelli, Galleani, Palla, Pezzi, Recchioni, and Smorti—were condemned to languish in the squalid islands that hosted the *coatti*. The more fortunate, like Gori, fled into exile.²⁶

²¹ Crispi, *Politica interna*, 305–306; S. Romano, *Storia dei Fasci Siciliani*, 471–480; Fedeli, "Luigi Molinari," 971–978; *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* (New York), February 9, 1952; *L'Ordine* (Turin), January 20, 1894; Fedeli, *Galleani*, 79–92; Nunzio Dell'Erba, *Giornali e gruppi anarchici in Italia (1892–1900)* (Milan, 1983), 42–60.

²² Quoted in Domenico Farini, *Diario di fine secolo (1891–1899)*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1961), 1:487.

²³ For the attentats of Lega and Caserio, see Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani nell'epoca degli attentati* (Milan, 1981), 36–54.

²⁴ Speech of July 11, 1894, in *Discorsi parlamentari di Francesco Crispi*, 3:807–808.

²⁵ Sernicoli, *L'Anarchia e gli anarchici*, 2:263–264; Raffaele Majetti, *L'Anarchia e le leggi che la reprimono in Italia* (Caserta, 1894), 84–141; Ambra Boldetti, "La repressione in Italia: Il caso del 1894," *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea* 6, no. 4 (October 1977): 496–501. The commissions were composed of the president of a Criminal Tribunal, the local prosecutor, and an advisor from the prefecture.

²⁶ Galleani, *Figure e figure*, 98.

The reaction unleashed against the anarchists soon enveloped the legalitarian socialists as well. Crispi disenfranchised 870,000 voters in order to undermine the socialist party's electoral base. Then, on October 22, 1894, he shattered the party by dissolving more than three hundred affiliate organizations and arresting party leaders and even deputies. The speed and intensity of the attack against them suggest that the socialists had been Crispi's primary target all along. Sporadic persecution against the socialists continued until the exceptional laws lapsed at the end of 1895, and during this time many socialists joined the anarchists in *domicilio coatto*. The reaction abated only when Crispi resigned the premiership on March 5, 1896, his political downfall the result of Italy's military debacle in Ethiopia.²⁷

The anarchist population in *domicilio coatto* diminished appreciably by the summer of 1896, some benefiting from the king's amnesty of March 14, others having completed their sentences. With replenished ranks and a less oppressive political atmosphere, the movement rebounded dramatically by the spring of 1897. Once again, the anarchist resurgence was spurred by the leadership of Malatesta, who had journeyed secretly to Ancona in March. Although the authorities knew he had returned to Italy and searched frantically for his hiding place, Malatesta eluded them for nine months. During this time he lectured frequently in Ancona, where the movement had a large following among the dockworkers, and to other workers in nearby towns. His principal activity was the publication of *L'Agitazione* in Ancona, the most important and long-lived newspaper he had yet directed. Malatesta emphasized the organization of an anarchist-socialist party, the development of close ties between the movement and the masses, the formation of workers' leagues of resistance, and strike action.²⁸

According to police reports, Malatesta's organizing campaign resulted in the formation of anarchist-socialist federations in the Tuscany, Emilia, Lazio, Umbria, the Marches, and the Romagna by July 1897.²⁹ These gains might have been greater if not for police persecution and the obstructionism of the individualists, whose principal organ was *L'Avvenire Sociale* of Messina. As usual, they were willing to sacrifice vitality, cohesion, and influence on the altar of free initiative. That most of these individualists were ex-coatti, recent expatriates, and long-standing exiles undercores how repression still functioned causally and catalytically to shape the move-

²⁷ Michels, *Storia critica*, 167–168; Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 282–292.

²⁸ Fabbri, *Vita y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 102–104; Santarelli, *Le Marche dall'unità al fascismo*, 162–165; Zocchi, *L'Anarchia*, 413–414; Fedeli, "Momenti ed uomini del socialismo-anarchico in Italia," 608–612.

²⁹ Prefect to police chief of Florence, July 22, 1897, in ASF, Questura, *Atti di Polizia*, f. 15, fs. 53.

ment's extremist tendencies.³⁰ And, like 1879 all over again, while persecution engendered intransigence and fanaticism on the left wing of the anarchist spectrum, it also helped precipitate defections among former exponents of orthodox anarchist socialism, such as Merlino.

Two years in prison constituted the gestation period for Merlino's critical analysis of the anarchist movement. In January 1897 he shocked his comrades with a public declaration in *Il Messaggero* of Rome (a bourgeois daily), urging electoral support of socialist and republican candidates as a means to combat the threat to liberty represented by Italy's reactionary government. Merlino's turnabout on the question of electoral tactics (he did not accept parliamentarism as an end) resulted in part from his disgust with the ideas and intolerance of the individualists, and in part from his fear that the anarchists were doomed to isolation unless they abandoned abstentionism and established a rapprochement with the legalitarian socialists. Malatesta and Merlino debated the issues throughout 1897, the one defending abstentionism and the other espousing a form of libertarian socialism entirely his own.³¹ Because Merlino had never acquired a personal following, his abandonment of anarchism did not provoke an internal crisis the way Costa's had in 1879, but the movement never replaced this most sophisticated and little appreciated theorist.³²

Contending with Merlino's defection and individualist obstructionism, as well as the daily threat of detection by the authorities, Malatesta was distracted from pursuing his agenda with maximum efficiency. Nonetheless, as a result of the inspirational leadership, ideas, and program he transmitted through *L'Agitazione* and the clandestine operations he conducted directly, the anarchist movement in 1897 had become more active and more influential among the working class than at any time since the First International. But the familiar pattern of resurgence followed by defeat was already unfolding. On April 22, 1897, an unemployed and disgruntled blacksmith named Pietro Acciarito, whose affiliation with the anarchist movement was marginal at best, attempted to assassinate King Umberto. *L'Agitazione* received special attention as police searched for nonexistent accomplices. Members of the editorial staff were condemned anew to domicilio coatto, but the newspaper managed to survive as other comrades assumed the

³⁰ For some typical articles attacking Malatesta's work, see *L'Avvenire Sociale* (Messina), May 10, 1896, January 18, February 12, 1897. See also Dell'Erba, *Giornali e gruppi anarchici in Italia*, 114–115.

³¹ The principal articles of their debate are included in Errico Malatesta and Francesco Saverio Merlino, *Anarchismo e democrazia: Soluzione anarchica e soluzione democratica del problema della libertà in una società socialista*, ed. Alfredo M. Bonanno (Ragusa, 1974).

³² Nettlau, *Breve storia dell'anarchismo*, 179–180; Errico Malatesta, "Francesco Saverio Merlino," *Il Risveglio* (Geneva), July 26, 1930, in his *Scritti*, 3:356–357; Venturini's preface to Merlino, *Revisione del Marxismo*, 4–15.

responsibilities of publication. Malatesta eluded his hunters until November 15, when his hideout in Ancona was discovered. However, as the old sentence of 1884 had lapsed and no new crime been committed, the authorities were obliged to release him. Free to move about, Malatesta lectured, organized meetings, and participated in debates, in what was to be his final round of activity in Italy for almost fifteen years.³³

A whirlwind of social upheaval and violent repression, surpassing the worst of 1894, swept through Italy in 1898.³⁴ Poor harvests, high import duties, and increased freight charges attributable to the Spanish-American War all combined to send the price of bread soaring and hungry Italians into the streets in protest. Ancona was one of the first cities to erupt. For two days—January 17–18, 1898—demonstrators led by anarchists, dockworkers, and the unemployed turned their fury against government buildings and granaries, ceasing only when the military occupied the city and declared martial law. Malatesta was among the hundreds arrested. He and eight comrades were charged with constituting an association of malefactors. The government's accusation triggered a broad campaign in defense of freedom of association, and at his trial of April 21–28, 1898, Malatesta was convicted instead of inciting hatred among the classes and sentenced to seven months imprisonment. Malatesta's condemnation as a *sommersivo* rather than a *malfattore*—sustained even after the prosecution appealed to the Ancona Court of Appeals and the Rome Court of Cassation—was considered a great moral victory for the anarchists in 1898.³⁵

But there was no time to exult. The crisis of 1898 reached its pinnacle a few weeks later with the *Fatti di Maggio* (May Events). Tensions that had been rising in Milan for months over local taxes, food prices, and other grievances erupted on May 5–6 with violent demonstrations and barricades. Premier Antonio Di Rudinì panicked, declaring martial law and dispatching troops under General Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris to suppress the rebels. Milan suffered three days of unrestrained violence by the military. Official figures placed the human cost at 80 civilians and 2 policemen dead, as well as 450 wounded, but the real toll was undoubtedly higher. To Bava Beccaris, the instrument of this carnage, King Umberto awarded Italy's

³³ Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 104.

³⁴ For accounts of the 1898 crisis, see Raffaele Colapietra, *Il Novantotto: La crisi politica di fine secolo (1896–1900)* (Milan and Rome, 1959); Umberto Levra, *Il colpo di stato della borghesia: La crisi politica di fine secolo in Italia, 1896/1900* (Milan, 1975); Louise A. Tilly, "I Fatti di Maggio: The Working Class of Milan and the Rebellion of 1898," in R. J. Bezucha, ed., *Modern European Social History* (Lexington, 1972), 124–158.

³⁵ Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 104; Fedeli, "Momenti ed uomini del socialismo-anarchico in Italia," 613–617; Santarelli, *Le Marche dall'unità al fascismo*, 178–179; *Il processo Malatesta e compagni innanzi al Tribunale Penale di Ancona e i recenti processi di Ancona e Castelferretti per le bombe ammaestrate* (Castellamare Adriatico, 1908).

highest decoration and gave public thanks for the "great service you have rendered to our institutions and to civilization."³⁶

Still another reactionary tide surged forward in the wake of the Fatti di Maggio. Thousands of anarchists, socialists, republicans, radicals, and even Catholics were arrested. Workers' associations of every description were dissolved and more than one hundred left-wing newspapers suppressed. In Milan alone, fifty-six socialists, including Turati, Kulisciov, and Lazzari, were condemned to sentences totaling more than 250 years. The government was determined to crush the entire spectrum of political, social, and ideological opposition.³⁷ When Crispi's exceptional law on domicilio coatto was reactivated on July 18, 1898, anarchists were once again transported en masse to the penal colonies. Those militants fortunate enough to escape the police dragnet fled into exile, many of them never to return to Italy. Malatesta, whose sentence expired on August 17, was not released from custody but condemned to domicilio coatto for five years. The advances he and his associates had struggled so hard to attain during the previous two years were completely eradicated and the movement nearly paralyzed.³⁸

That the fortunes of Italian anarchism might descend any lower seemed unimaginable, but they almost did. On August 8, 1897, Michele Angiolillo had assassinated the Spanish prime minister, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, to avenge the torture and murder of Spanish anarchists in the fortress of Montjuich. No such justification could be advanced, however, for the crime committed on September 10, 1898, by Luigi Luccheni, who killed the Empress Elizabeth of Austria. In response to these latest attentats, premier Luigi Pelloux convened the International Anti-Anarchist Conference in Rome to establish a system of common defense against the anarchists. Delegates from every European power deliberated from November 24 to December 21, 1898, but thanks to the resistance of the British, the conference accomplished little of significance.³⁹

Meanwhile, the anarchists confined to the "health islands" and those still at liberty had joined, by means of newspapers and public meetings, the Italian left's broad-based campaign to combat domicilio coatto as an institution unbecoming a civilized nation.⁴⁰ And yet, for all the suffering endured in island confinement, domicilio coatto had the positive effect of uniting anarchists of every orientation in the common experience of suffering for the

³⁶ Angiolini and Ciacchi, *Socialismo in Italia*, 363.

³⁷ Ibid., 350–366; Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism*, 191–192.

³⁸ Fabbri, *Vida y pensamiento de Malatesta*, 106.

³⁹ Richard B. Jensen, "The International Anti-Anarchist Conference of 1898 and the Origins of Interpol," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16 (1981): 323–347.

⁴⁰ The newspaper *Pro-Coatti* of Genoa was founded in October 1899 for the specific purpose of fighting domicilio coatto.

cause. The islands became a training camp for an entire generation of young militants, invigorating the rebellious spirits they were designed to crush, deepening their commitment to the anarchist faith, strengthening their resolve to fight another day. In the winter of 1899, when the socialist deputy Oddino Morgari visited the anarchists in confinement and recommended that they fight the government's reactionary policies by putting up Malatesta (who soon escaped from Lampedusa) and others as protest candidates, not one of the several thousand anarchists distributed throughout the islands supported the proposal. Speaking from the island of Pantelleria for all his comrades, Luigi Galleani proclaimed, "[the] Faith Remains Unchanged" ("Manet Immota Fides"):

If in order to leave here we must submit before a banner that is not ours, if our liberation must be the result of a compromise, if we must leave these shoals counting among our days here even one of which we must be ashamed, if we must return as apostates, diminished, stunted, transfigured, after having burned incense of false adoration before idols which we repudiate—better to remain!

. . . Alone, with the truth, against all the world, even in a garret, that is a sweet and consoling solitude.⁴¹

The likelihood that the anarchists would spend the rest of eternity in domicilio coatto seemed certain after Gaetano Bresci, an anarchist who had returned to Italy from Paterson, New Jersey, assassinated King Umberto on July 29, 1900, to avenge the victims of the Fatti di Maggio. By now, however, a coalition of socialists, republicans, radicals, and constitutional liberals had defeated Italy's experiment in reactionary government. The new wave of repression anticipated by anarchists in the wake of Bresci's deed did not materialize, although many were harassed in the usual search for accomplices. Italy had finally put the terrible 1890s behind her and a new era was dawning—even for the anarchists.⁴²

The next two decades, in terms of growth and influence, were the best years the anarchists experienced since their heyday in the 1870s. The reascendancy of the movement was driven primarily by the anarchists' contribution to the political and economic struggles embraced by the Italian left. Anarchists were key players in the antimilitarist campaigns that resisted Italy's war against Turkey in 1911 and the Central Powers in 1915. Likewise, in its syndicalist manifestation, anarchism played an increasingly important role in the Italian labor movement through the Chambers of Labor,

⁴¹ *I Morti* (Ancona), November 2, 1899.

⁴² For a survey of Italian anarchism in the twentieth century, see Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani nell'epoca degli attentati*, 161–228; Santarelli, "L'Anarchisme en Italie," 143–166; Carl Levy, "Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926," in David Goodway, ed., *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London and New York, 1989), 34–76.

a few national federations such as the railroad workers' union, and the *Unione Sindacale Italiana*, a 100,000-member labor confederation founded in 1912, which the anarchists under Armando Borghi eventually dominated.

The anarchists, under Malatesta's leadership, also provided the shock troops for Red Week, the insurrectionary upheaval that swept Italy in June 1914. After the Great War, Malatesta and the anarchists—most of them organized in the *Unione Anarchica Italiana*—stood in the foremost ranks of revolutionary agitation during the *biennio rosso* of 1919–1920. Lamenting the failure of the socialists to transform the September 1920 occupation of the northern factories into full-scale revolution, Malatesta issued a prescient warning: “Complete the revolution quickly or the bourgeoisie sooner or later will make us pay with tears of blood for the fear that we have instilled in them today.”⁴³ And pay they did. Italian anarchism never recovered from the retribution exacted by the Fascists.

⁴³ “Per la prossima riscossa,” *Solidarietà pro vittime politiche, Supplemento al n. 67 di Libero Accordo* (Rome), February 1923. In *Scritti*, 2:256.

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anarchists attempted several insurrections, but their organization was suppressed. By the 1880s the movement had become atomized, ideologically extreme, and increasingly isolated from the masses. Its foremost leader, Errico Malatesta, attempted repeatedly to revitalize the anarchists as a revolutionary force, but internal dissension and government repression stifled every resurgence and plunged the movement into decline. Even after their exclusion from the Italian Socialist Party in 1892, the anarchists remained an intermittently active and influential element on the Italian socialist left. As such, they continued to be feared and persecuted by every Italian government.

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